

About the MBTI® instrument

Jung's Theory of Psychological Types and the MBTI® Instrument

This excerpt is taken from Chapter 1 of the 1985 MBTI® Manual: A Guide to the Development and Use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator®. It was based on the first version of the Manual by Isabel Myers and written by Mary H. McCaulley, Ph.D. and founding President of CAPT. The Manual was published by CPP, Inc. The 3rd Edition of the Manual was published by CPP, Inc. in 1998.

"The purpose of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® is to make the theory of psychological types described by C. G. Jung (1921/1971) understandable and useful in people's lives. The essence of the theory is that much seemingly random variation in behavior is actually quite orderly and consistent, being due to basic differences in the way individuals prefer to use their perception and judgment."

Perception involves all the ways of becoming aware of things, people, happenings, or ideas. Judgment involves all the ways of coming to conclusions about what has been perceived. If people differ systematically in what they perceive and in how they reach conclusions, then it is only reasonable for them to differ correspondingly in their interests, reactions, values, motivations, and skills.

The MBTI instrument is based on Jung's ideas about perception and judgment, and the attitudes in which these are used in different types of people. The aim of the MBTI instrument is to identify, from self self-report of easily recognized reactions, the basic preferences of people in regard to perception and judgment, so that the effects of each preference, singly and in combination, can be established by research and put into practical use.

The MBTI instrument differs from many other personality instruments in these ways:

- It is designed to implement a theory; therefore the theory must be understood to understand the MBTI instrument.
- The theory postulates dichotomies; therefore some of the psychometric properties are unusual.
- Based on the theory, there are specific dynamic relationships between the scales, which lead to the descriptions and characteristics of sixteen "types."

The MBTI instrument contains four separate indices. Each index reflects one of four basic preferences which, under Jung's theory, direct the use of perception and judgment. The preferences affect not only what people attend to in any given situation, but also how they draw conclusions about what they perceive.

Extraversion–Introversion (E–I)

The E–I index is designed to reflect whether a person is an extravert or an introvert in the sense intended by Jung. Jung regarded extraversion and introversion as "mutually complementary" attitudes whose differences "generate the tension that both the individual and society need for the maintenance of life." Extraverts are oriented primarily toward the outer world; thus they tend to focus their perception and judgment on people and objects. Introverts are oriented primarily toward the inner world; thus they tend to focus their perception and judgment upon concepts and ideas.

Sensing–Intuition (S–N)

The S–N index is designed to reflect a person's preference between two opposite ways of perceiving; one may rely primarily upon the process of sensing (S), which reports observable facts or happenings through one or more of the five senses; or one may rely upon the less obvious process of intuition (N), which reports meanings, relationships and/or possibilities that have been worked out beyond the reach of the conscious mind.

Thinking–Feeling (T–F)

The T–F index is designed to reflect a person's preference between two contrasting ways of judgment. A person may rely primarily through thinking (T) to decide impersonally on the basis of logical consequences, or a person may rely primarily on feelings (F) to decide primarily on the basis of personal or social values.

Judgment–Perception (J–P)

The J–P index is designed to describe the process a person uses primarily in dealing with the outer world, that is, with the extraverted part of life. A person who prefers judgment (J) has reported a preference for using a judgment process (either thinking or feeling) for dealing with the outer world. A person who prefers perception (P) has reported a preference for using a perceptive process (either S

The Sixteen Types

According to theory, by definition, one pole of each of the four preferences is preferred over the other pole for each of the sixteen MBTI types. The preferences on each index are independent of preferences for the other three indices, so that the four indices yield sixteen possible combinations called "types," denoted by the four letters of the preferences (e.g., ESTJ, INFP). The theory postulates specific dynamic relationships between the preferences. For each type, one process is the leading or dominant process and a second process serves as an auxiliary. Each type has its own pattern of dominant and auxiliary processes and the attitudes (E or I) in which these are habitually used. The characteristics of each type follow from the dynamic interplay of these processes and attitudes.

Processes and attitudes

- Attitudes refer to extraversion (E) or introversion (I).
- Processes of perception are sensing (S) and intuition (N).
- Processes of judgment are thinking (T) and feeling (F).
- The style of dealing with the outside world is shown by judgment (J) or perception (P).

In terms of the theory, people may reasonably be expected to develop greater skill with the processes they prefer to use and with the attitudes in which they prefer to use these processes. For example, if they prefer the extraverted attitude (E), they are likely to be more mature and effective in dealing with the world around them than with the inner world of concepts and ideas. If they prefer the perceptive process of sensing (S), they are likely to be more effective in perceiving facts and realities than theories and possibilities, which are in the sphere of intuition. If they prefer the judgment process of thinking (T), they are likely to have better developed thinking judgments than feeling judgments. And if they prefer to use judgment (J) rather than perception (P) in their attitude to the world around them, they are likely to be better organizing the events of their lives than they are to experiencing and adapting to them. On the other hand, if a person prefers introversion, intuition, feeling, and the perceptive attitude (INFP), then the converse of the description above is likely to be true.

Identifying the MBTI Preferences

The main objective of the MBTI instrument is to identify four basic preferences. The indices E–I, S–N, T–F, and J–P are designed to point in one direction or the other. They are not designed as scales for measurement of traits or behaviors. The intent is to reflect a habitual choice between rival alternatives, analogous to right handedness or left-handedness. One expects to use both the right and left hands, even though one reaches first with the hand one prefers. Similarly, every person is assumed to use both poles of each of the four preferences, but to respond first or most often with the preferred functions or attitudes.

ISTJ	ISFJ	INFJ	INTJ
ISTP	ISFP	INFP	INTP
ESTP	ESFP	ENFP	ENTP
ESTJ	ESFJ	ENFJ	ENTJ

From the website www.capt.org (Center for the Applications of Psychological Type)