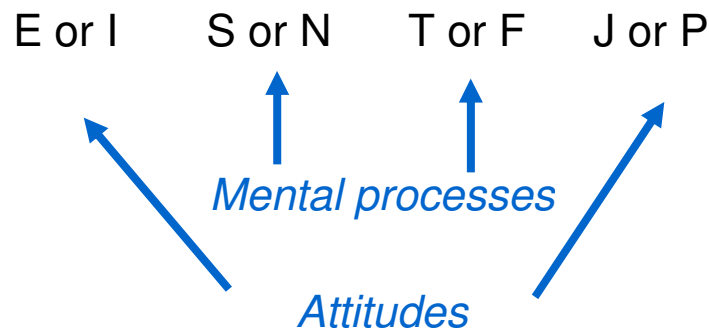


Introduction to functions and dimensions of type

I hope this page will help you to understand more about what personality type is about, to refer to as you read various articles. You will have seen a high-level description in '[What is personality type?](#)'. In this article I'll go into a little bit more depth. However, as this is a couple pages and not a book, descriptions must be brief.

Mental functions

In the Myers-Briggs model, each type is described by four letters such as ESTJ or INFP. The middle two letters are known as the mental functions or processes, and the outer two as the attitudes.



Although each type appears to be a simple addition of one letter from each of these pairs, the whole type is actually much more complex than that – similar to the way butter, eggs, milk and flour are very different baked as a whole, then simply being mixed together. And also, like baking, different proportions of each lead to quite different results.

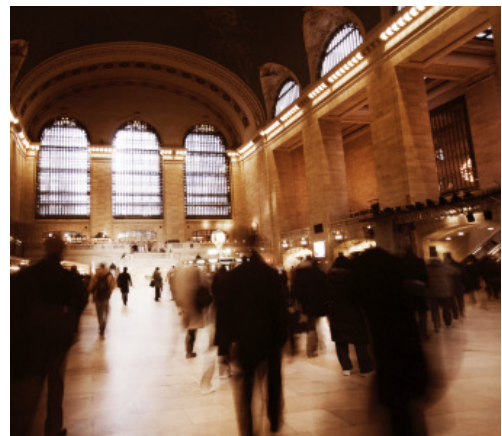
Sensing and Intuition are the **Perceiving** functions – the ways in which information reaches our consciousness. Thinking and Feeling are the **Judging** functions – they are how we evaluate or decide with the information that comes to us via Sensing or Intuition.

Of the two mental functions in each type, one will be introverted and one will be extraverted. So, if a specific type uses extraverted Perception (Sensing or Intuition), they will use introverted Judging, and visa versa.

The dimensions

Extraversion

Extraversion is used to describe people who focus more of their attention outwardly than inwardly, and who get their energy from interacting with people and the world about them. Because of this, they naturally tend to want to spend more of their time talking or doing. They may need to talk about something in order to be able to think about it. They tend to define themselves by the feedback they get from the world. If they have to work in solitude for extended periods, Extraverts are more likely to feel tired and stressed.



Introversion

By contrast, Introversion is a preference for focusing more attention on the inner world, and those with this preference replenish their energy by stepping back from the world and its activity. Because of this, they naturally tend to want to spend more of their time more quietly. They will want to think about something before they discuss it with someone else. They have an inner sense of who they are, and choose how much of this they will (or won't) show to those about them. Introverts are likely to feel tired and stressed if they have to spend extended periods with lots of people and activity, and no chance for contemplation.

Sensing

Sensing works a bit like it sounds – it perceives information through physical reality, through the senses and direct experience. In that sense it is real and practical, and about what is or was in concrete terms. An ability to naturally notice and be comfortable with details is often a hallmark of a Sensing preference.



Extraverted Sensing is when the focus is outward, vibrantly present in the here-and-now to the experiences coming through all the senses. There is often a great clarity of what is 'really there' and how it relates to the individual – an uncanny accuracy of physical interaction with situations, be they ball games or emergencies.

Introverted Sensing is when the focus is on conscious awareness of subjective experience – the memory of how things felt or tasted, or the physical reaction to emotions. External experience is internalised, stored as vivid memory, compared with past experiences. The familiar is comfortable, the past is valuable.

Intuition



Intuition is the process by which we perceive abstract concepts, possibilities, and the connections between and implications beyond simple reality. The interest is in the future – what ideas lead to, how situations can be changed, what might be better.

Extraverted Intuition is a focus on change and associations around us, always open to more new ideas, perspectives and connections. As with extraverted Sensing, the information from extraverted Intuition is mobile, dynamic and changing.

Introverted Intuition tends to focus on an inner sense of what is true, a picture of how the world ideally should work and hold together, what it could become. It looks for meaning beyond mere physical reality. New information is assessed in relation to this inner vision.

Thinking

Thinking is used in a specific jargon sense in this model. It is the Judging process where the criteria used for evaluation and decisions are objective, logical and non-personal. It stands back from a situation to weigh it dispassionately and assess what is accurate or correct.

Extraverted Thinking uses objective criteria (eg size, colour, cost) to organise things in the world, such as plans, objects, data, processes, organisations. It takes the inner perception of experience or vision and makes it visible in the world.

Introverted Thinking uses logical patterns to internally analyse information. It takes external perceptions through Sense experiences or Intuitive connections and assesses the truth, accuracy or correctness of the experience or pattern.

Feeling

Feeling is also used in a specific jargon sense, and does not mean emotions. It is the judging process where the criteria used for evaluation and decisions are subjective, values-based and personal. It steps inside a situation to see how it feels to be there, what seems good or bad in relation to values.

Extraverted Feeling uses the values of the society, group or family (usually internalised) to evaluate good and bad, and works towards shaping the world to align with those values. They seek to help people feel part of the group.

Introverted Feeling uses inner values which may be different from the group or society they are in, and works to align their personal life according to those values. They naturally imagine themselves in another's experience.



Judging

The last letter is really a signpost to which mental function that type uses in the outer world. Types that end in J use their Judgement in the outer world, either extraverted Thinking or Feeling, and their Perception is introverted Sensing or Intuition.

However, the effect is to work for a world that is orderly or harmonious, where plans are followed and decisions are made and followed through. Their decisions drive their behaviour in the visible world.

Perceiving

Types that end in P are those which use their Perceiving function in the outer world, either extraverted Sensing or extraverted Intuition. To balance that, their Judgement is introverted, either Thinking or Feeling.

The effect that others notice is openness to new information (through Senses or Intuition) which comes across as flexible and adaptable, keeping their options open. The judgements are made internally, and may or may not be expressed.

Summary

As you can see, there is more to a personality type than simply adding letters together. Each of the mental processes will be primarily focused inwardly or outwardly, and whichever attitude Perception has, Judging will be the opposite. This is for balance in the personality.

If you want to explore Myers-Briggs further, there are some [web resources](#) and [books](#) listed on my web site. [Contact me](#) for your own profile or for a workshop with your group or team:

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