

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator®: Frequently Asked Questions

We thought that you might find it useful to have a list of Frequently Asked Questions on the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*® (MBTI®) instrument in your toolbox when you are discussing using this instrument with either your teams and / or clients.

IS THIS THE REAL MYERS-BRIGGS® INSTRUMENT?

Yes, CPP Asia Pacific Pty Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of CPP, Inc., the exclusive publisher of the MBTI® instrument, is responsible for certification training and distribution of the MBTI® instrument in the Asia Pacific region.

Unfortunately there are a lot of imitators online using free tests bearing the Myers-Briggs® name to promote themselves and mislead users. These imitators are not affiliated with The Myers & Briggs Foundation or CPP. Many of these sites create a four-letter type output, but we cannot speak to the accuracy of their results or of the approach they use to explain the personality framework. We have found that many of these sites misrepresent the MBTI® type preferences and create type stereotypes that negatively impact people's understanding of the MBTI® personality framework. As a rule of thumb, if it's free it's not real.

WHY SHOULD I PAY TO COMPLETE THE MBTI® ASSESSMENT WHEN THERE ARE SO MANY FREE TESTS ON THE INTERNET?

Our goal is to deliver a highly accurate, research-backed experience that provides valid and reliable results, as well as an evolving learning tool set that includes actionable tips.

We recognise that there are personality test alternatives out there. The MBTI® instrument is designed for people who are looking for something beyond a casual personality quiz, and our aim is to provide a comprehensive exploration of personality type that is personally relevant to each user. We are continually investing in research, optimising assessments to increase reliability and relevancy, and are always looking for new insights to share with our users.

Our pricing ensures that we can continue to work on and deliver an experience that reflects our values and ambitions while bringing the power of the MBTI® instrument to individuals around the world.

About the MBTI® instrument

WHAT IS THE MBTI® INSTRUMENT?

The *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*® (MBTI®) instrument is a personality assessment designed to be useful in both work and everyday life. It helps people identify four basic personality preferences that combine to form their individual MBTI® personality type. Understanding your MBTI® results can help

you understand and appreciate the natural differences in the ways people think, communicate, and interact—differences that can be the source of much misunderstanding.

Drawn from Carl Jung’s theory of psychological types and refined through decades of research, the MBTI® instrument has been used for more than 70 years to establish greater self-knowledge and interpersonal understanding among people of all ages and backgrounds. It has been translated into more than 20 different languages for use around the world.

IS THE MBTI® INSTRUMENT VALID AND RELIABLE?

Yes. The instrument’s reliability has been proven statistically and its validity has been firmly established in hundreds of separate studies. Reliability refers to whether the results are consistent: Do people tend to reply to the items in the same way when they complete the assessment at a later time and do they tend to get the same four-letter type? Can you count on the results? Validity refers to the instrument’s ability to identify psychological types according to Carl Jung’s theory.

WHAT DO THE LETTERS ASSOCIATED WITH THE MBTI® INSTRUMENT MEAN?

The MBTI® instrument helps people discover and understand their personality type by identifying their preferences between four pairs of opposites. Each of the opposite preferences is represented by a specific letter:

- **Extraversion (E) or Introversion (I):** Your preference indicates whether you tend to focus on and draw energy from people and activity “outside yourself” (E) or your own inner world of thought and reflection (I).
- **Sensing (S) or Intuition (N):** Your preference indicates whether you tend to focus on information that’s real and tangible (S) or to take in the big picture and the connections between facts (N).
- **Thinking (T) or Feeling (F):** Your preference indicates whether you tend to make decisions through logical analysis (T) or by considering what is important to you and to other people involved (F).
- **Judging (J) or Perceiving (P):** Your preference indicates whether you generally like to live your life in a planned, orderly way (J) or in a flexible, spontaneous way (P).

Technical information on the research and psychometric properties underlying the MBTI® instrument are published in the *MBTI® Manual* and in other scientific publications. Recent updates can be accessed at <http://www.cppasiapacific.com/research-white-papers.aspx>.

WHO WERE MYERS AND BRIGGS?

Katharine Cook Briggs (1875–1968) and her daughter, Isabel Briggs Myers (1897–1980), the originators of the MBTI® instrument, were keen and disciplined observers of personality differences. Briggs studied Carl Jung’s ideas and extended and applied them by studying family and friends. Then she and her daughter classified behaviour differences, connected them to Jung’s ideas, and developed an instrument to categorise the differences. Their instrument, known today as the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*® instrument, would go on to become the most widely used personality tool in history.

WHAT MAKES THE MBTI® INSTRUMENT DIFFERENT FROM OTHER PERSONALITY ASSESSMENTS THAT I'VE HEARD ABOUT?

The MBTI® instrument was the first tool to describe healthy, normal personalities rather than abnormal ones. It identifies 16 personality types that are all equally valid and healthy. Knowledge of psychological type helps people better understand themselves and each other, resulting in more effective and satisfying human interaction.

No other personality instrument is backed by as much research and as many years of use as the MBTI® instrument, which has been taken by millions of people worldwide. The MBTI® instrument is continually updated through ongoing research to ensure its ability to identify meaningful personality differences.

CAN I FAKE MY RESPONSES SO MY TYPE WILL COME OUT A CERTAIN WAY?

Yes, but why would you want to? If you're familiar with the eight preferences pairs of the MBTI® instrument and want your assessment to come out in a certain way, you can probably respond in such a way as to either conform to a certain type or come close. But faking your responses won't give you information that can help you increase your self-awareness, improve your decision making, get along with others better, develop as a leader, find work you enjoy and enhance your relationships. So most people choose to respond honestly when completing the assessment.

CAN ANYONE COMPLETE THE MBTI® ASSESSMENT?

No. The instrument is intended for use with individuals aged 14 and above and is written at a 7th-grade reading level.

WHY WOULD AN EMPLOYER ASK ME TO COMPLETE THE MBTI® ASSESSMENT? DO I HAVE TO COMPLY?

Organisations around the world, including most of the Fortune 100 and many government and non-profit organisations, use the MBTI® instrument with their employees and managers for a number of purposes, including the following:

- Training and developing employees and managers
- Improving teamwork
- Coaching
- Improving communication
- Resolving conflict
- Understanding personal styles to maximise effective use of human resources
- Determining the organisation's type

The MBTI® instrument can be used to inform decisions through discussion, but it should never be used to hire, fire or promote people.

No, you don't have to comply. Completing the MBTI® assessment is voluntary - not required - and results are confidential. The ethics of the instrument, as stated by CPP, the publisher of the MBTI® instrument, maintain that individuals should be free to choose whether or not to complete the MBTI® assessment and to decide with whom to share results.

About psychological types

WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGICAL TYPE / PERSONALITY TYPE?

Psychological type is a concept developed by Swiss psychologist Carl Jung (1875–1961), who described different patterns of normal behaviour resulting from people's inherent tendency to use their minds in different ways. Your psychological type, also called "personality type," is the pattern of behaviour you tend to show. In the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*® instrument, your type is indicated by your preferences between Extraversion or Introversion, Sensing or Intuition, Thinking or Feeling, and Judging or Perceiving. Your four preferences combine to form one of 16 distinct personality types, each of which is denoted by a four-letter type code (ENFP, ISTJ, etc.).

IS THERE A BEST AND WORST PERSONALITY TYPE?

No. As Isabel Briggs Myers wrote in the *Introduction to Type*® booklet, "There is no right or wrong type and there are no better or worse combinations of types in work or relationships. Each type and each individual bring special gifts."

IS PERSONALITY TYPE RELATED TO EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE?

Yes, in a way. Emotional Intelligence (EQ) generally refers to one's ability to manage impulses, empathise with others and show resilience in the face of stress or obstacles. EQ is often divided into two categories: intrapersonal (your ability to control yourself internally in a positive way) and interpersonal (your skills in getting along with others). Personality type, as identified by the MBTI® instrument, is also concerned with internal and external processes, and thus can be a very useful tool for enhancing and developing emotional intelligence.

DOES THE MBTI® INSTRUMENT STEREOTYPE PEOPLE?

No. The MBTI® assessment does not stereotype people. Among the basic principles of the instrument, as stated in the *Introduction to Type*® booklet written by Isabel Briggs Myers, are the following:

- Each type has special gifts.
- Each person is unique and expresses type in a unique way.
- There is no good or bad type.
- You are the final judge of your own psychological type; your MBTI® results suggest your type based on your responses, but the individual is the final judge of his or her own type.
- Type does not explain everything; humans are complex.
- Type may be used to understand and forgive, but never as an excuse.

- By becoming aware of your own type biases, you can avoid negative stereotyping.

Some people who use the MBTI® instrument may not be aware of their type biases and may stereotype others based on MBTI® type. This is not a proper use of psychological type.

ARE THERE REALLY ONLY 16 TYPES OF PEOPLE IN THE WORLD?

The 16 MBTI® types describe how people use their energy internally and externally, but they're not static, one-size-fits-all categories. Each four-letter type cannot be understood fully by simply adding up the four preferences; a more complete understanding is based on learning about how the preferences interact with one another.

So there is a great deal of variation among individuals of the same type. You may know other people who are the same four-letter type as you, but you'll find that they have some characteristics in common with you and also have differences from you. In addition to your four-letter type, the Step II™ form of the MBTI® instrument also explores five characteristics underlying each preference, providing a richer understanding of your MBTI® type preferences.

Why complete the MBTI® assessment?

HOW WILL KNOWING MY PERSONALITY TYPE HELP ME?

Knowing your type will help you better understand yourself and your behaviours. It will also help you appreciate others' styles and thus enable you to deal more constructively with the differences between you and other people. With a greater understanding of your own inherent strengths, you will be better able to take advantage of opportunities to use those strengths for more effective functioning in work and life. Many individuals have used their understanding of their MBTI® type to help them find a satisfying job, choose an academic major, improve their effectiveness and satisfaction at work and enhance their interactions and relationships with others.

IF I ALREADY KNOW MY PERSONALITY TYPE, DO I NEED TO COMPLETE THE MBTI® ASSESSMENT?

Not necessarily, but you may want to take the assessment for several reasons.

If you've already completed a personality assessment, was it the genuine MBTI® instrument? Other type instruments are not as reliable and valid, so your results may not be accurate. If you did not take the genuine assessment, you might want to take it now.

Even if you've already completed the MBTI® assessment, consider how long ago it was and whether your life circumstances have changed dramatically since then. Generally, because the MBTI® instrument measures inherent preferences, there is no need to take it multiple times. However, if your life has changed significantly, you might find it helpful to take it again. In addition, the newer forms of the MBTI® instrument are based on the latest research, so if it has been many years since you completed the assessment, you might consider retaking it.

If you haven't already done so, you might also consider contacting a professional who can help you complete the MBTI® Step II™ assessment. This advanced form of the MBTI® instrument provides more depth by looking at different facets of each of your preferences.

WILL MY TYPE CHANGE OVER TIME?

No. Because your type is inherent, your basic preferences likely will not change. However, type *develops* over a person's lifespan. Jung theorised that people have an innate urge to grow and have everything they need within themselves to become healthy, effective individuals. Psychological type is the compass guiding this growth process.

What the MBTI® instrument can tell you

WHAT WILL MY MBTI® ASSESSMENT TELL ME THAT I DON'T ALREADY KNOW?

The MBTI® instrument is a self-report tool - it gives you answers based on what you report about yourself - so in one sense, it won't tell you anything that you don't already know. But knowing something and being able to use it effectively in your life are two vastly different things. Most people enjoy completing the MBTI® assessment, and when they get their results, they feel affirmed in that they've received an accurate description of their personality. Many go on to set new goals and improve their decision making and relationships.

HOW CAN KNOWING MY PERSONALITY TYPE HELP ME GET ALONG BETTER WITH OTHER PEOPLE?

Myers and Briggs created the MBTI® instrument because they wanted to help people understand themselves and others better and appreciate the differences between them. When you complete the MBTI® assessment and review your results, you learn that there are different ways of interacting with others, taking in information, making decisions and organising one's life. That information can help you better understand your friends, co-workers and family, and improve your interpersonal interactions.

WILL MY TYPE TELL ME WHAT I'M GOOD AT DOING?

No. The MBTI® instrument does not measure competencies in the way a mathematics test can measure your maths skills, for example. None of the MBTI® questions are designed to determine how good you are at a particular task.

However, a lot of research exists about what careers people of particular personality types tend to enter and what kinds of tasks they tend to enjoy. For example, research has shown that INTPs and INTJs tend to like the theoretical work of science and ESFPs and ESFJs tend to enjoy tasks that involve helping others. So completing the MBTI® assessment may give you an insight into what kind of work you enjoy, and people who enjoy their work often do better at it.

SHOULD I CHOOSE A CAREER BASED ON MY MBTI® TYPE?

No, not based on your type alone. Career decisions are usually most sound when they take into account a number of factors, including interests, personality, skills, values, lifestyle needs and others. Knowing your MBTI® type can help you in career decision making, but it should not be the only factor you consider.

Research shows that people of each personality type tend to choose particular career fields and are likely to avoid certain other fields. You may want to consult current career books on the subject or

work with a career counsellor who is certified to use the MBTI® instrument to learn more about type and career choices.

WILL IDENTIFYING MY TYPE HELP ME KNOW THE KIND OF PERSON WITH WHOM I WOULD BE HAPPIEST?

No. Relationships are too complex and what makes people happy is too diverse for one instrument to capture such information reliably. Successful and happy couples have included people who share the exact same personality type, people whose types are opposite and people with some preferences in common and others quite distinct.

That being said, the MBTI® instrument is often used in couples counselling because it can help uncover normal, healthy differences between partners. A couple that has completed the MBTI® assessment and learned to respect and value each other's style has built at least part of the foundation for a happy relationship.

Following up

WHAT CAN I DO TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE MBTI® INSTRUMENT AND MY PERSONALITY TYPE?

CPP Asia Pacific features a variety of additional information and resources on our site at www.cppasiapacific.com. If you have questions, please contact us and we'll be happy to provide further assistance.

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www.cppasiapacific.com