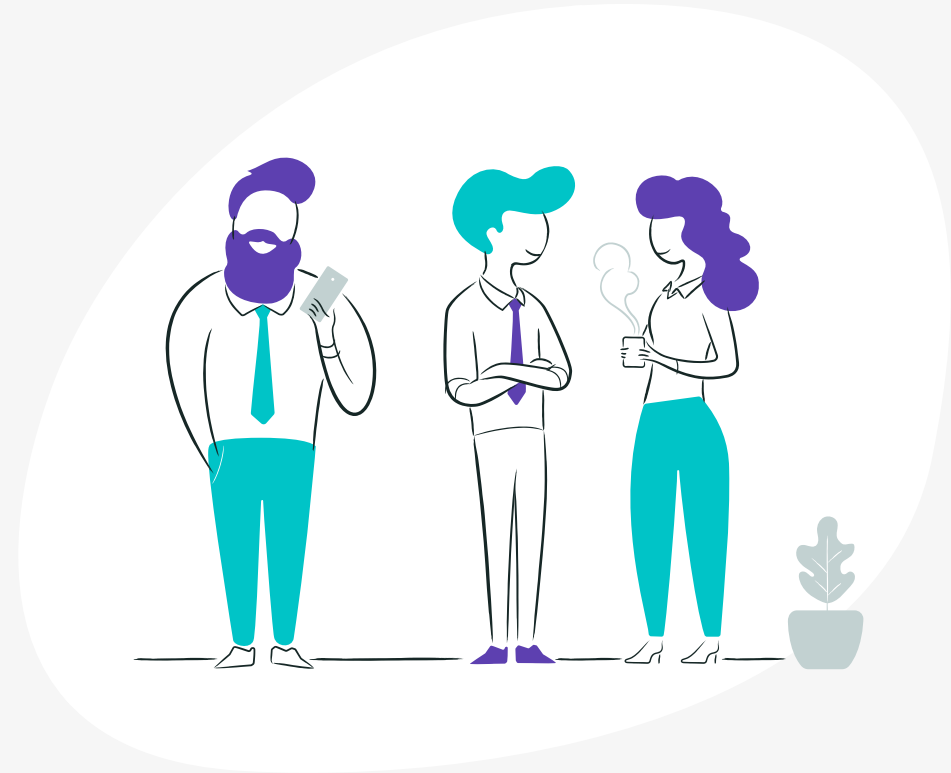




# The ultimate <sup>(and official)</sup> guide to **Extraversion** and **Introversion**



# At first glance

So you took a quiz online and found out your personality type. Pretty cool, right? You were probably amazed (and kind of freaked out) by how accurate some of the personality descriptions were—especially the ones having to do with Extraversion vs. Introversion. You may have immediately labeled yourself an **Extravert**, an **Introvert**, or even an **ambivert**—and devoured every related listicle you could find. You know the ones. They have titles like “Photos Only Extraverts Understand” or “10 Shirts Every Introvert Needs.” So does it really end there? Do we hold tightly to our labels and laugh at funny memes and call it a day? Nope. Well, not if you’re reading this ebook. Those articles are a dime a dozen, but we’re here to bring you a guide that’s worth its weight in gold. This guide comes from the company that is the exclusive publisher of the Myers-Briggs® assessment (yes, there is only one real Myers-Briggs assessment—the others are knockoffs). Here we’ll get into the truth behind Extraversion and Introversion, not the opinions of some blogger who took Psych 101 in college and is a self-proclaimed Myers-Briggs personality type expert.

## Who is this guide for?

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This guide is for anyone who has ever thought about or tried to identify his or her preference for Extraversion or Introversion. It’s also for individuals who would like to learn more about why they lean toward one or the other. And it’s for people who are willing to try flexing their personality preferences a bit to experience life on the “other side.”

## What will I get out of this guide?

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This guide will give you a thorough understanding of Extraversion and Introversion from the people who teach it around the world. You’ll get definitions, background, behavioral clues, information about misconceptions and stereotypes, and more. Oh, and some pretty great conversation starters, too.

## What if I already know I’m an Extravert/Introvert?

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First things first: You have a preference for Extraversion or Introversion, but no one is completely extraverted or completely introverted.

Labeling individuals as Extraverts or Introverts without understanding that they (everyone, actually) use both preferences to some extent puts people into boxes and allows stereotypes to ensue. Everyone can extravert or introvert at any time. It's just that we are generally more comfortable using one preference than the other and tend to rely on it more in our daily life.

Think of having a preference for Extraversion or Introversion like being right-handed or left-handed. Naturally, using your dominant hand allows you to write more easily, more quickly, and more comfortably. That's not to say that you never use your other hand, but using your dominant hand comes more naturally. Most people use their dominant hand when they need to write, just as most people go through life naturally relying on their preference for either Extraversion or Introversion.

### **What do I do with this information?**

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Shout it from the mountaintops. Or quietly share it with someone. Take the official MBTI assessment if you haven't already, and/or get your friends to take it. Learn more about your personality type.

Find out how to flex your preferences and how that can be helpful to you. Learn about how your preferences affect your communication style, how you interact with people, and how you can use this knowledge to be kinder to yourself or make changes in your life to be happier. Wonder what you did without this information your whole life. The possibilities are endless.

“ There is no such thing as a pure introvert or extrovert. Such a person would be in the lunatic asylum.”  
**Carl Jung**

# The core of Extraversion and Introversion: **What energizes you?**

Imagine for a moment that you are at your favorite theme park with a small group of close friends or family. You're having a great day. Sure, it's crowded, but the lines aren't too long and you're with your friends. After six hours of going on rides and walking around, however, you're pretty tired. And hungry, too. Someone suggests taking a break to get something to eat and then heading back into the theme park until it closes. Which of the following options sounds more appealing to you?

## A

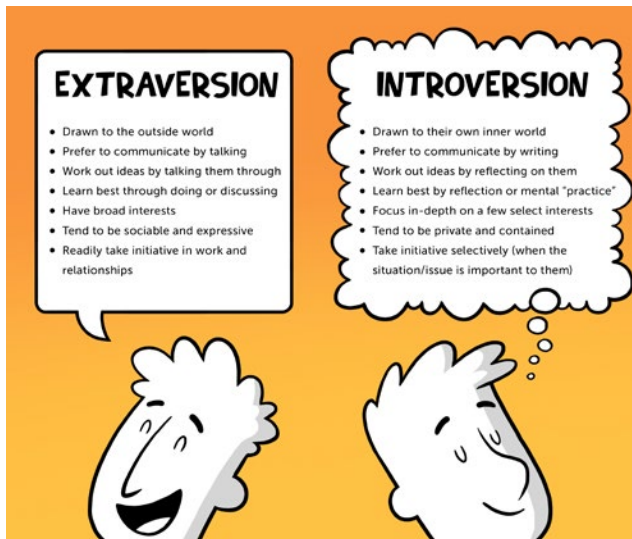
**A.** Going back to your hotel room, ordering room service, and relaxing in solitude for a little while

**B.** Sitting down for a meal at a local restaurant with your group and talking about everyone's action plan for the rest of the day

## B

If you picked option A, you might have a natural preference for Introversion. If you picked option B, you might have a natural preference for Extraversion. These preferences are opposite ways to direct and receive energy. People who prefer Extraversion like to focus on the outside world and are energized by interacting with others and taking action. People who prefer Introversion like to focus on their inner world and tend to get energized by reflecting on ideas, memories, and experiences.

# Quick background on the Myers-Briggs® assessment



*E-I Classic Characteristics used with permission of Sylvia Castaneda*

Now that we have a framework for Extraversion and Introversion, let's get some quick background on where these terms originated. Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Swiss psychoanalyst or psychiatrist Carl Jung observed that there are two opposite types of people, those who prefer Extraversion and those who prefer Introversion (earlier we read there is no such thing as an E or an I). He

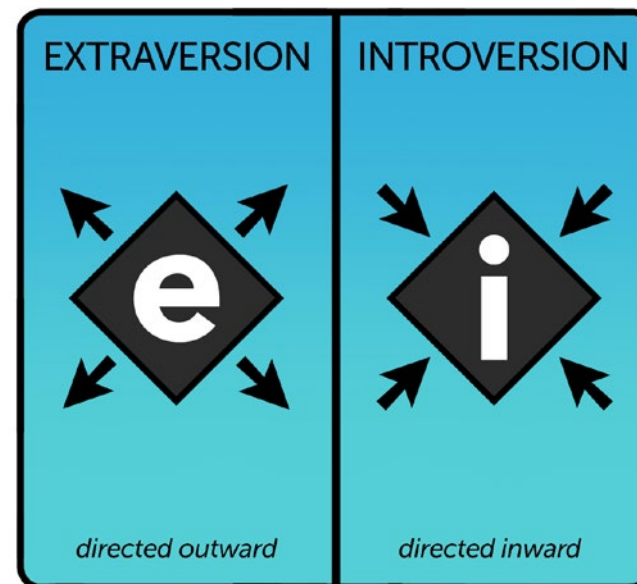
described people who prefer Extraversion as those whose energies are primarily directed outward toward people and events in their external environment and those who prefer Introversion as people whose energies are primarily directed inward toward thoughts and experiences in their inner environment. His identification of these two types of people led eventually to the detailed and broad-ranging discussions of Extraversion and Introversion that are found in *Psychological Types* (1921/1971). Jung also noted differences in the way people take in or gather information and in the way they make decisions and come to conclusions about that information. He defined eight different patterns of normal behavior based on these differences, which he called *types*. Jung was a complex man who had a gift for developing and exploring concepts that significantly impacted the field of psychology. His theory of psychological types is what helped spark the development of the MBTI assessment.

The authors of the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*<sup>®</sup> (MBTI<sup>®</sup>) assessment, Katharine Cook Briggs and Isabel Briggs Myers, were a dynamic mother-daughter duo who studied and built on Jung's ideas, eventually expanding the number of types to 16. They were fascinated by personality differences and wanted to make Jung's ideas more widely available to help people understand themselves and *others* better. That was their impetus for developing their assessment. Many decades later, the MBTI assessment has evolved into the world's most widely used tool for understanding and appreciating personality differences among people. <sup>1</sup>

The MBTI assessment helps you identify your personality preferences. After taking the assessment, you learn about the theory behind the assessment and hypothesize what your preferences might be. Then you learn which four (of eight) MBTI preferences you chose. These preferences combine to form your four-letter personality type (e.g., INFP, ESTJ, etc.). The first letter is always either *E* or *I*, and it indicates your preference for Extraversion or Introversion. Once

you verify your four-letter personality type, you can more easily pinpoint your natural strengths, potential areas for growth, stress triggers, and much more.

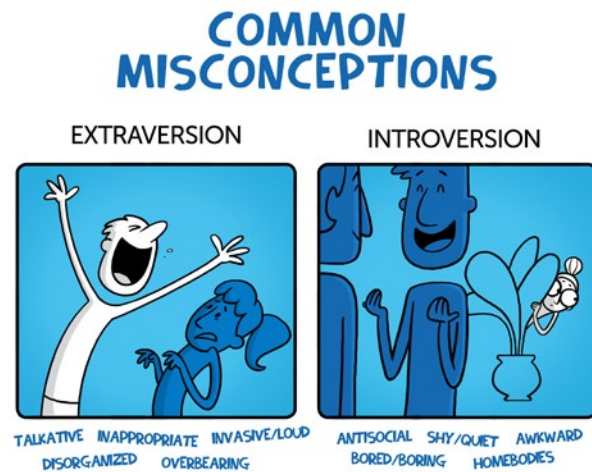
There are a few ways you can take the Myers-Briggs assessment if you haven't already. The first way is online, only at [www.mbtionline.com](http://www.mbtionline.com). You could also find someone who is a certified MBTI practitioner who can administer the assessment to you. Lastly, many people take the assessment through their workplaces or universities.



<sup>1</sup>Source: *Introduction to Myers-Briggs<sup>®</sup> Type* Copyright 1998, 2015 by Peter B. Myers and Katharine D. Myers. All rights reserved. Myers-Briggs and MBTI are trademarks or registered trademarks of The Myers & Briggs Foundation in the United States and other countries.

# Personality memes: Funny because they're true, right?

In the past few years, dozens of memes and articles about how “Introverts are underrated” or “Extraverts make the best friends” have popped up on the Internet. Those kinds of write-ups are fun, but they tend to perpetuate negative stereotypes. Here’s a quick look at some common negative stereotypes about people who prefer Extraversion and Introversion:



It’s not that playful articles about Extraversion and Introversion are necessarily inaccurate. It’s that they tend to be so narrowly focused that they don’t tell the whole story. The trick is learning how to wade through the information so that you can appreciate people’s personality differences.

On a related note, a quick Google search will bring up countless quizzes and infographics that match your personality type with that of celebrities, fictional characters, or even inanimate objects. While these may be interesting conversation starters, they’re aimed at being entertaining rather than accurate, and they typically have little to do with the Myers-Briggs personality framework. Often their creators “determine” celebrities’ personality type by means of “type guessing”—deciding which four letters best match *their* perception of the celeb.

Perfect example: Numerous personality blogs and celebrity type sites had Stephen Colbert pegged as having preferences for ENTP. But on *The Late Show*, Colbert took the official MBTI assessment and learned that he has preferences for INFP. That just goes to show that you can't assess people's personality type based strictly on their behavior—especially when it comes to celebrities, who may show a different persona to the public than to their close friends or family. The reason? We can *modify* our behavior. In fact, we do it all the time. Being extra attentive to that person you want to impress? Not swearing in front of your grandmother? We can adjust how we act to suit the situation and the people involved. Moral of the story: Type guessing can be fun, but take it with a grain of salt (or a whole shaker full).



**DO YOU FIND YOURSELF EXHIBITING ANY OF THE BEHAVIORS COMMONLY ASSOCIATED WITH EXTRAVERSION OR INTROVERSION?**

- e** Do you have a tendency to interrupt people—not necessarily in a rude way (we hope) but in an “I just can’t wait to share my experience” way?
- i** Are you often silent when you’re first asked a question? Do you find that you often need time to reflect before you’re ready to share an answer.
- e** Do you tend to sit close to people, or lean in while they’re talking? This is one way people try to fully experience the social interaction you value.
- i** Are you sometimes perceived by others as cold or isolated? It may just be that you value solitude and time for reflection.

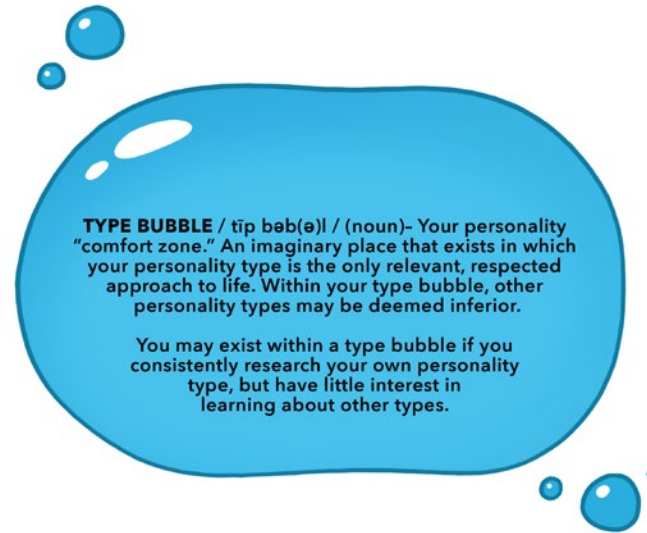
“ My wife and I always seemed to be talking in circles... But once we understood how we each processed information, our conversations and decision making became much smoother.”



# Pop your “type bubble” and thank us later

Being in a type bubble is really common—especially when it comes to Extraversion vs. Introversion. For example, maybe you were taught that being exuberant and outspoken was unacceptable, so you shut down your natural preference for Extraversion. And now you’re finally learning what it means to embrace it. Or perhaps your preference for Introversion was historically mistaken for awkwardness or even illness. (By the way, Michael Segovia, an MBTI expert, has a [great example of this in his TEDx talk](#)) No wonder you’re all ears when it comes to anything that educates you about your particular preference. There are very real experiences and emotions on the other side (not sure what this means) of that “E” or “I,” so it can be comforting to finally get some insider info about the way you direct and receive energy.

But as our curiosity about our E or I preference intensifies, there can be a downside. We can get so caught up in our type bubble, so identified with our preference, that it doesn’t leave much room



personal growth. It’s like everyone is at a party and all the people who prefer Extraversion are in one room, while all the people who prefer Introversion are in another room—and the two groups aren’t really mingling. on.

That’s another reason why those articles we talked about earlier are so popular—because everyone loves a little playful polarization.

Another reason why we become so devoted to our preference for Extraversion or Introversion: we all crave connection, belonging and recognition, and sometimes a label appears to give us just that. Unfortunately, the more separated each

preference group becomes, the more territorial we get about our type bubble. It's enough to make you say, "She doesn't even go here!" if someone dares to step outside their comfort zone and flex their preference in your direction. <sup>2</sup>

We can get so caught up in our type bubble, so identified with our preference, that it doesn't leave much room for personal growth. It's like everyone is at a party and all the people who prefer Extraversion are in one room, while all the people who prefer Introversion are in another room—and the two groups aren't really mingling. That's not a good party—let alone a good way to live. It's important to have the self-awareness of your preferences and to remember that not everyone shares your same preferences, but gaining a deeper understanding of personality preferences like Extraversion and Introversion can lead to better relationships, improved communication, and so much more.

“When I was in college I was criticized by a professor who told me I was too ‘structured,’ that I needed to be more spontaneous. Being structured is a core part of who I am; it felt exhausting to be more spontaneous. It was not until after I took the MBTI assessment that I saw my desire for structure as a strength of mine.”

<sup>2</sup> Yes we did add a Mean Girls™ reference. Ten points if you caught it.

# Type dynamics — let's dive deeper for a sec

So we already established that everyone lives in *both* worlds (Extraversion and Introversion)—but one world energizes us and one world drains us. Now it's time to get a bit more complex. All of us have a specific part of our personality type that we *extravert* and a specific part of our personality type that we *introvert* (*using these terms as a verb once again*). This is what's known in psychology as "type dynamics." Here's an example: someone with preferences for INFP will actually prefer extraversion when they're learning something new (a.k.a. taking in information). But when it's time to make a decision, they do that with a preference for introversion (sometimes coming across as indecisive to their counterparts because they are introverting or not sharing their decision making). For anyone with preferences for INFP, their favorite process is introverted Feeling but their second process will always be extraverted. For someone with INFP preferences, that second process

is extraverted Intuition. Think of the favorite process as your personality super power—it's the strongest part of your personality and the part that's often most developed.

“ The MBTI personality tool gave us a way to talk about our differences that helped us connect and grow closer as a family. ”

Since their favorite function is introverted, it happens inside the person's mind and isn't something they will necessarily share outwardly. So while your friend may be telling you all about this big-picture idea that they have, you may wrongly assume this person has preferences for ENFP instead of INFP. This pattern holds true for all 16 Myers-Briggs personality types. If you have Extraverted preferences (your four-letter MBTI personality types starts with E), your favorite function will be extraverted and your second favorite function will be introverted. If you have preferences for Introversion (your four-letter MBTI personality types starts with I), your favorite function will be introverted and your second favorite function will be extraverted. That's why simple labels like "Introvert" and "Extravert" miss the mark. Everyone uses both preferences to some degree, and what behaviors or clues you may observe in someone else may or may not reflect their favorite function. We could write an entire eBook (or a library) on this topic as it provides a depth of understanding of your own and other's personality that goes beyond four letters, but if you're reading this you probably already knew

there was so much more to the story than just the Extraversion and Introversion labels. However if you don't know your Myers-Briggs personality type yet, those four letters are a very good place to start.

“ Now I understand why I find structures and rules confining and want to be original and creative— why I enjoy spending time alone and why I am idealistic, romantic, a perfectionist.... ”

# Biases and blind spots. We all have them.

We all have biases and blind spots. However, when we operate within our comfort zone (as most of us do), it can be tough to recognize them. For example, people with a preference for Introversion may have a bias against people who “ask too many questions.”

Let’s say you have a preference for Extraversion and have a fantastic idea for a project at work. The idea isn’t fully developed, but you tell your colleague (who prefers Introversion) about it anyway. However, the whole time you’re talking, your colleague is almost completely silent. A few nods and a “that sounds good” are all you get. It would be easy to write off your colleague as uninterested or unimpressed. Introversion can often look like something is “wrong” to someone who prefers Extraversion.

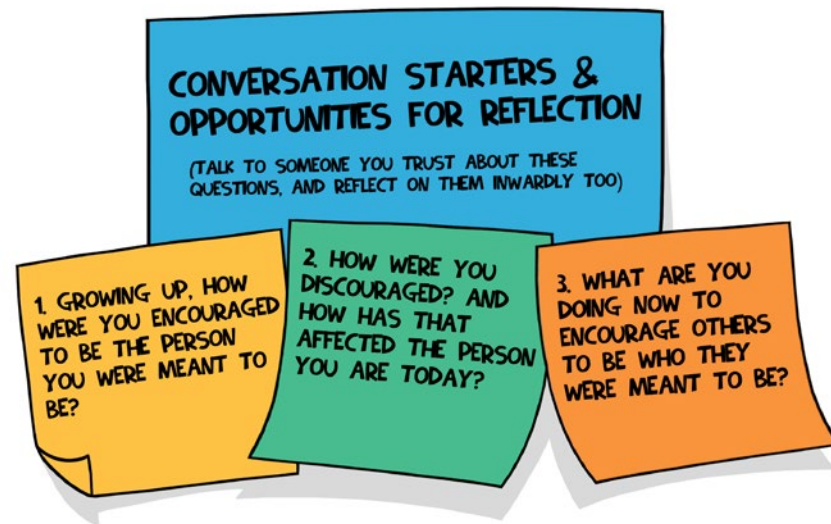
But the truth is, if the other person has a preference for Introversion, he or she probably needs time to process the information internally before commenting on it.

Now put yourself in the shoes of your colleague who has a preference for Introversion. While you’re talking about that fantastic idea, your colleague may not understand your need to process a decision out loud. He or she may misinterpret your “thinking out loud” as long-windedness or disorganization. People who have a preference for Introversion will often brainstorm internally first and then present their best ideas to others. Those with a preference for Extraversion will often think out loud or bounce ideas off of other people—verbally sorting through various ideas to get to the best one.

# Nature vs. nurture — How could your childhood affect your preferences?

While we were born with our preference for extraversion or introversion, our childhood and life experiences may have molded us in a different direction. If we're lucky, our closest family and friends have encouraged us to embrace our parts of our personality that feel most comfortable to us. Unfortunately, many of us can remember times when we were discouraged from being ourselves in favor of something more socially or culturally acceptable. Looking back on the "type bubble" examples, perhaps you were taught that you should be seen and not heard, so you rejected your preference for extraversion. Or maybe your desire to read a book in your room instead of spending time with family was mistaken as illness or social anxiety. The E-I preference pair often comes with a long list of experiences and emotions that can be difficult to overcome,

especially if you don't have the language of MBTI personality type to help you describe such personality differences. Here are some talking points and opportunities for reflection that can help:



# How to make personality differences work

We all have to interact with people who are different from us. Here are some quick tips for smoother sailing:

**E** If you prefer **Extraversion**. If someone is walking away while you are talking to him, stop where you are. Give him some space both physically and verbally. Also, think about pausing after you ask a question. Try silently counting to 10 and then asking the question again in a different way. Often those with a preference for Introversion will respond after seven or eight seconds. And try not to misinterpret it when someone doesn't seem as engaged as you are.

If you prefer **Introversion**. When someone asks you a question, sometimes your best response is, "Give me a minute to think about it." That way, the person feels heard. Work on paraphrasing the question and leaning forward for people who need more immediate communication. And if someone interrupts you, resist the urge to shut down or interpret that behavior as rude. Instead, recognize that an interruption may just mean the other person is really interested in the discussion. Try to stay in the conversation by interjecting (interrupting back) or letting the other person know to expect additional thoughts from you later.

This is a lot of information to take in. Maybe some of it sounds familiar but other parts are completely new. Keep in mind that Extraversion and Introversion are only two of the eight total preferences of Myers-Briggs type. In addition to a preferred way of directing your energy and getting energized (Extraversion or Introversion), you also have a preferred way of taking in information (Sensing or Intuition), making decisions about that information (Thinking or Feeling), and approaching the outside world (Judging or Perceiving). And remember, although you favor one or the other preference in each pair, you can and do use all eight preferences at least some of the time, depending on the situation.

Once you know your preferences, you can start to dive deeper and learn about how they work together to form your personality. This can help you better understand yourself and what makes you tick. And because your personality is at the core of who you are, it touches EVERY. PART. OF. YOUR. LIFE. What are you passionate about? What motivates you? What are you not getting enough of? What career would fulfill you? How can you be happier? What stresses you out, and what's the best way to relieve stress? Why do you act one way with this person and another way with another person?

Then, once you've started understanding yourself, you can better understand how you're similar to or different from other people, and how you can work with those similarities and differences to have better relationships and friendships, communicate better, handle conflict better, and so on. There's so much more you can learn about yourself using the Myers-Briggs framework!

“ Once I was familiar with the Myers-Briggs personality types, I was better able to identify people's preferences and speak to people in a way that felt clear to them.”



# Quick Q&A: Your top five E-I questions

**1.** I feel like I have a preference for Introversion, but sometimes I also feel like I have a preference for Extraversion. Can I have both?

*Yes. While we all favor one preference over the other, we can flex and use the opposite preference if the situation requires it. Sometimes we flex subconsciously (maybe we've learned this is the best response and do it without even thinking about it) and other times we flex consciously when we're trying to grow as a person or improve ourselves in some way.*

**2.** Do ambiverts exist?

*No—it's a misnomer. Ambivert is a label for someone who seems to use Extraversion and Introversion equally. We all use both parts of our personality, but we do usually favor one preference over the other.*

**3.** I have a preference for Introversion. Can I practice extraverted behaviors to help me in things like school and business?

*Definitely. In fact, we recommend it. We all need to use both Extraversion and Introversion as we handle day-to-day communication, stress, change, and more.*

**4.** Do relationships (romantic or otherwise) work better when people have the same preference for Extraversion or Introversion?

*Opposites can attract, and like-minded people can attract, too. Any relationship can work if you're willing to put in the effort. If you're curious about MBTI type in romantic relationships specifically, check out our blog series about dating and romance [here](#) (hyperlink).*

**5.** How do I take the official MBTI assessment?

*We're glad you asked. All you have to do is visit [www.MBTIonline.com](http://www.MBTIonline.com) to get started.*

# About the author

**Michael Segovia, M.A.**, is a credentialed MBTI® Master Practitioner and the lead facilitator for the MBTI® Certification Program.

Michael has been teaching the MBTI framework to individuals and teams alike for over 10 years and is the lead trainer at The Myers-Briggs Company, the exclusive publisher of the Myers-Briggs assessment. He has facilitated workshops on the MBTI in the United States, China, Russia, India, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Germany, Belgium, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United Arab Emirates.

He has appeared on *Talk Radio*, *You Auto Know*, *The Jill Tracey Show*, Retirement TV's *What's Next*, and *Wall Street Journal* podcasts to discuss assessment issues in career management, training, and development, and has been quoted in publications including, *Fast Company, Inc.*, *Training*, *Workforce*, *Triple Pundit*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. In addition, Michael spoke about his experience with the Myers-Briggs assessment at a 2014 TED Talk.

