

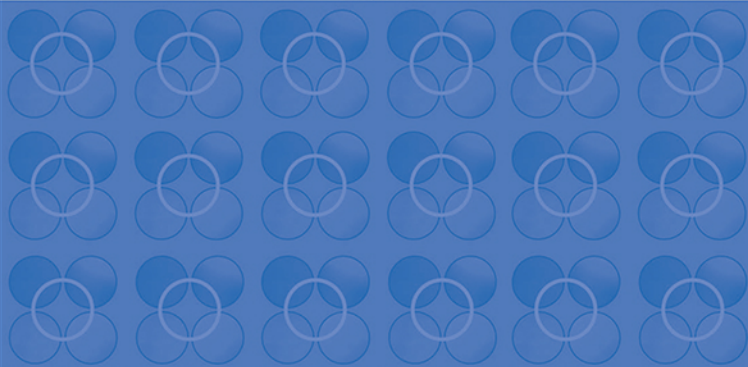
INTRODUCTION TO



# Personality Differences

Discovering the Impact  
of Personality Differences

**DONNA DUNNING**



Includes the Myers-Briggs®  
Personality Differences Questionnaire®

## THE MEANING OF PERSONALITY DIFFERENCES

Have you ever thought about how the people you work with, family members, friends, acquaintances, and others do their work and interact with each other in different ways? Over the years scientists and psychologists have studied and learned about these differences in people. This booklet is designed to help you understand the basic personality differences in people as well as your own personality preferences.

Carl Jung, an important contributor to many ideas of current psychology, identified two distinct ways people take in information and two ways people make decisions, which greatly affect their actions and their interactions with others. This booklet will help you discover your preferences for taking in information—as a Realist or a Futurist—and for making decisions—as a Logician or a Champion. Discovering your preferences will help you understand how you prefer to do your work, learn, communicate, work on a team, and solve problems.

## **Taking In Information:** **Realists and Futurists**

When taking in information some people prefer to focus on facts, realities, and concrete information that can be gathered through the senses. These are the *Realists*. Other people prefer to look beyond the facts and focus on trends, possibilities, and ideas linking the facts together. These are the *Futurists*. Both approaches for taking in information are equally valuable, and each approach is useful in different ways.

**Realists** naturally focus on the realities and practical applications of information. They pay attention to here-and-now problems and situations and are aware of relevant facts and details. They enjoy working on tasks and solving problems to achieve solutions that are useful right away.

At work, Realists prefer practical tasks and like to see immediate results. They enjoy learning relevant and concrete information they can apply in the short term. They communicate by sharing experiences and useful facts and details. A Realist will want to be a member of a team that focuses on the present situation to accomplish practical goals.

**Futurists** naturally link pieces of information together and relate them to ideas and future possibilities. They pay attention to patterns and links between facts rather than to just the facts. Futurists enjoy thinking about what could be and often imagine different ways to do tasks or achieve goals. They enjoy working strategically to achieve long-term solutions.

At work, Futurists prefer roles that allow them to imagine new and different ways to do tasks. They enjoy learning about theories and ideas and want to connect facts to ideas and possibilities. When communicating, Futurists share ideas and enjoy talking about what could be rather than what is. A Futurist will want to be a member of a team that focuses on connecting facts and ideas to accomplish long-term goals.

## WHAT'S YOUR PREFERENCE, REALIST OR FUTURIST?

Read the statements below summarizing the Realist and Futurist approaches. Identify the approach you trust the most—the one that best describes your natural, most comfortable way of taking in information.

### Realist

- Focus first on what is directly observed before finding underlying patterns
- Most interested in facts and details as they are known now
- Prefer information to be presented in a factual, step-by-step way
- Work at a fairly steady pace
- Impatient or frustrated with tasks that are abstract or ambiguous
- Enjoy having senses engaged at work and working in a hands-on manner
- Focus on immediate relevant realities and practical applications
- Trust what is known from experience

### Futurist

- Focus first on possibilities, what facts might mean and how they fit together
- Most interested in connecting facts to ideas, theories, and potential
- Prefer information to be presented as a broad overview with many links
- Work with bursts of energy
- Impatient or frustrated with highly sequential, detailed, or routine tasks
- Enjoy creating ideas and possibilities, imagining and envisioning
- Focus on future possibilities and creating changes
- Trust what is original and inventive

**Which do you think is your natural preference?**

☐ Realist ☐ Futurist

**Which had a higher sum on the questionnaire?**

☐ Realist ☐ Futurist

Compare this self-assessment to your questionnaire result. If they match, you can be fairly sure you have identified your natural preference. If your self-assessment is different from your questionnaire result, consider possible reasons.

Remember, the questionnaire is usually accurate; however, the way you choose to answer the questions might sway the results. Consider both preferences carefully and then pick the one that most accurately reflects your natural preference, even if your choice here is different from your questionnaire result.

**Which approach most**

**accurately describes your preference?**

☐ Realist ☐ Futurist

## WHAT'S YOUR PREFERENCE, LOGICIAN OR CHAMPION?

Read the statements below summarizing the Logician and Champion approaches. Identify the approach you trust the most—the one that best describes your natural, most comfortable way of making decisions.

### Logician

- Evaluate situations by focusing on logic and analysis
- Most influenced by objective data and cause-and-effect relationships
- Consider the pros and cons of ideas, information, and opinions
- Make objective decisions based mainly on logic and reason
- Prefer to be impartial, task focused at work; separate work and personal life
- Correct errors by spotting flaws and providing corrective feedback
- Achieve fairness through consistent application of rules and principles
- Ask questions and probe opposing viewpoints; stand firm on decisions until evidence to the contrary is provided

### Champion

- Evaluate situations by focusing on people's values and personal factors
- Most influenced by how information and situations affect the people involved
- Consider personal effects of ideas, information, and opinions
- Make subjective decisions based mainly on needs and feelings of people
- Support, appreciate, and encourage; personally connect with coworkers
- Focus on strengths, appreciate and advocate for others
- Achieve fairness through consideration of individual circumstances
- Accept and try to understand others' viewpoints; will compromise on decisions to maintain harmony

Which do you think is your natural preference? ☐ Logician ☐ Champion

Which had a higher sum on the questionnaire? ☐ Logician ☐ Champion

Compare this self-assessment to your questionnaire result. If they match, you can be fairly sure you have identified your natural preference. If your self-assessment is different from your questionnaire result, consider possible reasons.

Remember, the questionnaire is usually accurate; however, the way you choose to answer the questions might sway the results. Consider both preferences carefully and then pick the one that most accurately reflects your natural preference, even if your choice here is different from your questionnaire result.

Which approach most

accurately describes your preference?

☐ Logician ☐ Champion

## PERSONALITY DIFFERENCES IN ACTION

Personality differences become obvious when we work with other people, whether they be coworkers, supervisors or leaders, customers, clients, family members, teachers, or anyone else. These differences affect the way we approach our work, learning, and communication. They also strongly affect how we work in a group or on a team and how we go about solving problems. There are three important ways you will benefit from learning about personality differences.

First, thinking about personality differences will help you define and focus on how you prefer to do things. When you are engaged in work or learning that uses your natural preferences, you will likely be more interested, energized, and successful. Because we often develop skills and competencies linked to our preferences, learning about our preferred ways of taking in information and making decisions will help us identify our natural strengths. For example, a Realist may shine when doing work that requires observation and attention to detail and a Futurist may find strategic planning or envisioning enjoyable. A Logician may thrive on work that requires logical analysis and a Champion may find cooperative activities rewarding.

Second, you can begin to think more about and define specifically what you prefer not to do. Then you can minimize the time you spend on those kinds of activities or find ways to cope and adapt when you are required to do them. Learning how to deal with nonpreferences is an important aspect of self-development. For example, in a work situation a Realist might miss seeing some possible outcomes and a Futurist might miss some current realities and details. A Logician might overlook some important personal considerations and a Champion might overlook some logical consequences. In these cases, we must learn to use our nonpreferences in order to perform our work well.

Third, learning about personality differences can be a starting point for learning to recognize and be more tolerant of others who take in information and make decisions in a different way. When people approach work in very different ways, misunderstanding, conflict, and stress can occur. When you understand work style differences, you will see how these differences can be valuable rather than disruptive or frustrating.

Pages 18 through 37 explore how Realists, Futurists, Logicians, and Champions prefer to carry out the day-to-day activities of working, learning, communicating, participating in teamwork, and solving problems. By learning about these different approaches, you will accomplish your work more successfully, interact more effectively, and minimize misunderstanding.

The information on each activity is organized on facing pages for each pair of preferences so you can quickly see and compare the different approaches. As you read through these applications of personality differences, consider what your personal preference is and how you can use this approach to your benefit. Also think about what you don't prefer and how you currently are adapting your style to cope with times when your nonpreferences are called into action. Also think about your interactions with others and how work stresses and conflicts might reflect personality differences.

## PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

### Zig-Zag Decision Making Using All Four Approaches

Isabel Briggs Myers, codeveloper of the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*® (MBTI®) personality assessment, was keenly interested in understanding personality differences. She recognized the importance of using all the approaches—Realist, Futurist, Logician, and Champion—together when solving problems and making decisions. Because each approach has unique strengths and blind spots, the best decision-making or problem-solving strategy will incorporate aspects from all four. The material below has been modified from Myers' *Introduction to Type*® booklet. Her problem-solving approach is called the Zig-Zag model and follows four steps:

**1. Use a Realist approach to define the problem.**

Starting with a realistic approach sets the stage to clearly and practically define the problem. Some helpful questions to ask include:

- What are the facts?
- What have you or others done to resolve this or similar problems?
- What has worked or not worked?
- What resources do you have available?

**2. Use a Futurist approach to consider all the possibilities.**

Brainstorm to ensure that you are open to new ideas and ways of thinking. Brainstorming is a process that generates many ideas and solutions without evaluating them. Some helpful questions to ask include:

- What other ways are there to look at this?
- What do the data imply?
- What are the connections to larger issues or other people?
- What theories address this kind of problem?
- What are all the possible ways to approach the problem?



**3. Use a Logician approach to weigh the consequences of each course of action.**

Taking a detached and impersonal perspective ensures that you are analyzing the options logically. Some helpful questions to ask include:

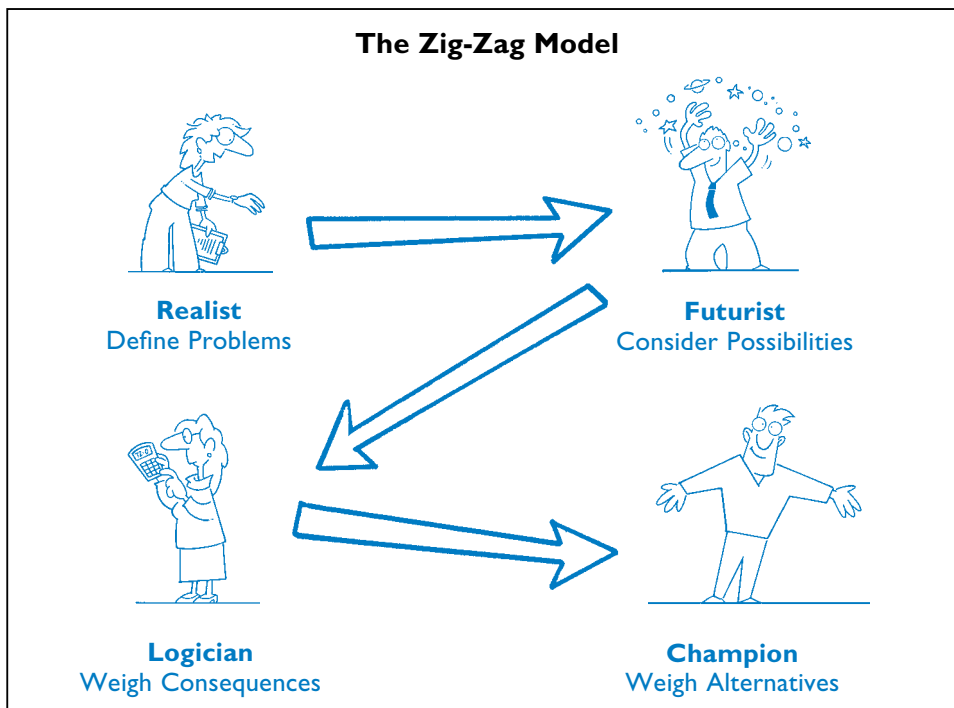
- What are the pros and cons of each option?
- What are the logical consequences of each option?
- What are the consequences of not deciding and acting?
- What effect would each option have on other priorities?
- Would each option apply equally and consistently to everyone?

**4. Use a Champion approach to weigh the alternatives.**

This step ensures that you are considering how each option fits with your values and the values of others. Some helpful questions to ask include:

- How does each option fit with my values?
- How will the people involved be affected?
- How will each option contribute to harmony and positive interactions?
- What support will people need if we choose this option?

After using all four approaches to work through the problem, you can then make and act on a final decision. Remember, you will tend to focus on the parts of decision making that use your personality preferences, so be especially aware of and include the steps that involve your nonpreferences. When you have implemented a solution, evaluate the results to ensure that you included all the facts, possibilities, consequences, and effects.



### The Zig-Zag Model in Action

**A manager explains how he uses the Zig-Zag problem-solving model to help his employees provide customer service:**

“When I learned about personality differences, I realized how helpful it was to have my staff apply the different approaches in dealing with customer complaints. I teach them that the first step is to listen to the customer’s experience using the **Realist** approach. By listening to the facts of the situation, the employee can identify specifically what the customer is unhappy about. When the employee has all the facts in hand, he or she can define the problem and the customer’s needs clearly.

“Then the employee can use the **Futurist** approach to come up with possible solutions to the customer’s problem. For example, if the customer is not happy with a product, the employee might think about options such as replacing or repairing the product, providing a refund, or offering an alternative product or store credit. Having more than one solution provides choices for the customer and also shows the customer we are willing to take various actions to meet his or her needs.

“Then, using a **Logician** approach, the employee can look at the costs and benefits of each option. The Logician’s perspective also ensures that company policies and guidelines are followed and that each customer is dealt with in a reasonable and consistent manner.

“Finally, staff are encouraged to consider the unique situation and needs of each customer using the **Champion** approach. For example, if a customer needs a re-placement product immediately or needs a specific feature in the product, that need must also be taken into account. When my staff looks at the situation using these four steps, they are much more likely to find a win-win solution to the customer’s problem.”