

WHAT IS YOUR PERSONALITY TYPE?



HOW YOU LEARN IS BASED ON WHO YOU ARE

Vic Zuccarello, OTR/L, CEAS II

OCCUPRO has delivered a variety of educational courses since 2003. Formats have included live in-class, live webcast, and on-demand. Our education media includes individual and teamwork, lecture, audio, powerpoint, video, smart board, group discussion, demonstration, hands-on practical, and fieldwork experiences for the software and non-software user. This 5-sense approach is sensitive to the fact that no two students are alike – we all receive, process, and respond to stimuli differently.

Think back to your last course. You spent several hundred dollars to pay for registration, airfare, car rental, lodging and meals. But, you thought it was presented well and walked away with information you thought valuable. Later you spoke to another attendee who thought the course was a terrible waste of money and time. Preconceptions, attitude, and motivation could account for much the difference. But, most likely, your class-mate simply learns differently than you.

All students are different in the way they perceive, process and act on information. Learning style is largely dictated by personality type. So, to get the best value from continuing education it is a good idea to know your personality type and how 'type' affects the way you learn. Knowing that, you can use that information to guide your selection of continuing education experiences.

This article reviews the basic personality types and associated learning styles. I have also included a simple and fun method to assist you in identifying your personality type. I will conclude with a description of how OccuPro integrates learning theory into our education delivery model.

Is it really that simple? My personality dictates the way I learn? Try this:

- Throw a wad of paper with your dominant hand and notice how comfortable and familiar it feels to do so, and the little smile you experience when it lands effortlessly into a waste basket.
- Now, throw another one with your non-dominant hand. Notice the change in biomechanics - the deliberateness of movement, the drastically different feel of the paper wad, and your frown when it bounces off the rim of the waste receptacle. Keep at it. It will eventually become more natural, but it will take time and effort.

Well, that is a hard-wired, neuromuscular precept. What is natural, “feels natural” and what is not, feels not. Learning style is a concept of hard-wiring as well. We learn best in situations that “feel natural”.

Think of a college course you took that you didn't like. For me, it was College Algebra. The teacher was articulate, polite and funny which I normally like. But, the material did not match my learning style, I did not feel comfortable, the concepts were abstract, and the work was frustrating because what I read seemed like a different language to me.

My frustration was magnified by the fact that people around me seemed to fully understand the material and excel in the course. They got it, I didn't, and it looked easy for them. I barely passed.

It was not a matter of intelligence, effort, or motivation. It was a matter of how I perceived, processed, and acted on the information. Finding the value of 'x' meant nothing to me and I'd prefer to let 'x' stay right where it was. I later was relieved when I discovered that I learned differently than many of those students who quickly grasped the material.

I learn best when I talk things through with other people and engage with my environment – hammering my malleable thoughts into a shape that I can understand and if it has a physical component, all the better. This is because I am an 'ENFP'. What's that? That is my personality type.

Our Personality Type is made up of personality traits. There are 8 basic personality traits that combine to form our personality type.

- Personality type determines our preferences, and
- our preferences determine the way we perceive our environment, and
- those perceptions determine the way we learn best.

In college, I took the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)¹. The MBTI taught me that 8 basic personality traits were divided between 4 continua or preference scales:

- **Extrovert v. Introvert ---- (E v. I).**
 - How we interact with the world & where we direct energy.
- **Sensing v. Intuitive ----- (S v. N).**
 - The kind of information we naturally notice.
- **Thinking v. Feeling ----- (T v. F).**
 - How we process information & make decisions.
- **Judging v. Perceptive ---- (J v. P).**
 - Whether we prefer to live in a more structured manner or more spontaneously.

Let's examine each individual trait:

1. Extroverts (E): Vocal

- a. Who they are: focus on the outer world/energize through others.
- b. How they learn:
 - i. Methods – engaging with people & things, shapes, thoughts.
 - ii. Environments – group discussion/physical tasks.

2. Introverts (I): Verbal

- a. Who they are: focus in the inner world/energize through thought and contemplation.
- b. How they learn:
 - i. Methods – quiet reflection/think-through before speaking.
 - ii. Environments – reading, listening to lectures, independent.

3. Sensing (S): Detailers

- a. Who they are: take in information using the 5 senses.
- b. How they learn:
 - i. Methods – doers/practical application.
 - ii. Environments – like facts, structure, memorization.

4. Intuitive (N): Visionaries

- a. Who they are: look for patterns and relationships among facts.
- b. How they learn:
 - i. Methods – thinkers/like theory before facts.
 - ii. Environments – like general concepts, seeing relationships, and using imagination to solve problems.

5. Thinking (T): Analysts

- a. Who they are: look at potential consequences/decide based on logic, analysis and reason.
- b. How they learn
 - i. Methods – analyze problems to bring logical order out of confusion.
 - ii. Environments – like clear objectives that are precise and action oriented.

6. Feeling (F): Pleasers

- a. Who they are: relate concepts to personal experiences.
- b. How they learn
 - i. Methods – establish relationships and work in cooperative groups to solve problems that benefit each other.
 - ii. Environments – cooperation, rapport, encouragement.

7. Perceptive (P): Jugglers

- a. Who they are: juggle many tasks, bristle with deadlines, struggle with completing long-involved tasks.
- b. How they learn
 - i. Methods – like to break work into several steps so they can be completed quickly so they do not lose interest.
 - ii. Environments – variety and spontaneity.

8. Judging (J): Closers

- a. Who they are: make decisions, come to closure, and move on.
- b. How they learn
 - i. Methods – like to develop detailed plans, work the plan, and complete it so they accomplish something.
 - ii. Environments – agendas, deadlines, and no surprises.

The middle 4 traits are the most important in determining the type of learner you are. Not that the first 2 and last 2 traits are unimportant. They determine the manner in which you best focus and the manner in which you get things done. But, they are less important in determining the manner by which you process data. Let's look at the middle 4 traits more closely:

• Sensing / Thinking Learners (ST's)

- These students ask, "What?"
- Their preferences include:
 - immediate responses and feedback
 - details and sequential order, clear step-by-step directions
 - hands-on activities with a specific, correct answer
 - knowing exact expectations; how well it is to be done

- **Sensing / Feeling Learners (SF's)**

- These students ask, “What does it mean to me?”
- Their preferences include:
 - getting personal attention and praise
 - sharing feelings and experiences
 - working in groups/being part of a team
 - having someone show how to do something
 - role-playing and personal expression
 - non-competitive games where no one loses
 - interpersonal activities; learn about himself/herself

- **Intuitive / Thinking Learners (NT's)**

- These students ask, “Why?”
- Their preferences include:
 - planning and organizing independently before working
 - analyzing and examining pros and cons
 - arguing and debating
 - thinking about ideas and how they are related
 - finding/designing a new way to do something
 - logical and strategic games

- **Intuitive / Feeling Learners (NF's)**

- These students ask, “What if?”
- Their preferences include:
 - learning without time constraints
 - praise for personal ideas and insights
 - using creativity and imagination,
 - open-ended activities with many possibilities
 - working on many things at once
 - self-expression and self-discovery

Now that you know the 8 basic personality traits and understand how 4 of those traits most affect learning, we can cover ways in which those traits can combine to form your own individual personality type. To do this, we will take a little test.

Instructions:

1. The link brings you to a test with 4 sections representing the continua previously discussed.
2. Review the statements and check the statement that represents your preference.
3. Do not spend more than 3 seconds on each choice.
4. Once you have completed all 4 of the continua a brief description of your personality type and the associated learning style will be displayed.
5. Relax and have fun!

Remember, this is not a formal personality test and it is not an intelligence test.

- There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers.
- No individual type is better than another.
- Each type has its strengths and its blind spots.

This is a simple screen that will hopefully give you some valuable insight into how you perceive, process, and act on information.

<http://www.occupro.net/modified-mbti-test>

References:

- Tieger PD, Barron B. (2014): Do What You Are – Discover the perfect career for you through the secrets of personality type. Little Brown and Company.
- Briggs Myers I. (1998): McCaulley M. Manual: A guide to the Development and Use of the MBTI. Consulting Psychologists Press.
- Western Nevada College (2016): Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. Available at: <http://www.wnc.edu/mbti/>