

# MYSTICISM TEST

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## MYSTICISM TEST (The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator)

**Primary Disciplinary Field(s):** Psychology, Personality Assessment, Psychometrics

### 1. Core Definition and Proponents

The instrument described under the term **MYSTICISM TEST** in certain contexts is, in fact, the widely recognized Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). This psychometric tool was first conceptualized and developed by American personologist **Isabel Briggs Myers** (1897-1980) and her mother, **Katharine Cook Briggs** (1875-1968), as a systematic method for classifying individual differences in personality. The core objective of the instrument is to identify and categorize individuals based on their expressed preferences between contrasting alternatives across several key dimensions of psychological functioning. This classification system posits that individuals possess natural, enduring inclinations, which, when combined, result in one of sixteen distinct psychological types. The test utilizes a questionnaire format that forces choices between these alternatives, leading to a four-letter acronym representing an individual's dominant type, providing a framework intended for self-understanding and group dynamics analysis.

Unlike clinical psychiatric evaluations, the MBTI is designed as a self-report inventory that focuses on normal personality variations rather than pathology. Its foundational purpose, as envisioned by Briggs and Myers, was to help individuals understand their own preferences and appreciate the differences in others, particularly in educational and vocational settings. The test is rooted deeply in the theoretical framework of Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung, specifically his work on psychological types published in 1921. Briggs and Myers sought to make Jung's complex theoretical constructs practical and applicable to everyday life. They believed that by identifying these innate preferences, individuals could better utilize their strengths and understand the natural friction that arises from differences in how people perceive the world and make decisions. Thus, the instrument functions not merely as a description, but as a mechanism intended to foster mutual comprehension and effective organizational placement.

### 2. Theoretical Foundation and Historical Development

The historical trajectory of the MBTI begins not with a formal academic project, but with the keen observational interest of Katharine Cook Briggs. Inspired by her daughter Isabel's future husband and the differences she perceived between him and other family members, Briggs began an intensive study of personality differences. This interest led her to the work of **Carl Jung**, whose book, *Psychological Types*, provided the theoretical structure she and Myers needed. Jung proposed that people experience the world using four principal psychological functions: sensation, intuition, feeling, and thinking, and that one of these functions is typically dominant in each individual. Furthermore, Jung introduced the dichotomy of introversion and extraversion, defining

them not as measures of sociability, but as orientations of psychic energy--inward (Introversion) or outward (Extraversion).

Isabel Briggs Myers joined her mother in this endeavor during the 1940s. While Jung only outlined the theoretical framework, he did not create a testable instrument. Myers and Briggs dedicated decades to developing and refining a paper-and-pencil inventory that could reliably sort respondents into the preferences dictated by Jung's theory. Their development process spanned the years of World War II, initially focusing on identifying personality types that would be suitable for various war-related jobs. The test saw its first significant application in educational and workplace settings throughout the mid-20th century. Isabel Myers completed the first manual for the inventory in 1944, and the full instrument, the **Myers-Briggs Type Indicator**, was published in 1962. It was subsequently licensed and distributed, gaining widespread popular acceptance despite ongoing psychometric scrutiny.

### 3. The Four Dichotomies: Key Classification Components

The MBTI classifies individuals using four central dichotomies, each representing a contrasting pair of preferences. The score on the test places an individual predominantly on one side of each pair, leading to the final four-letter type code. The underlying assumption is that while everyone uses both sides of each dichotomy, one preference is dominant and more comfortable, defining the habitual manner of interaction with the world.

**Extraversion (E) versus Introversion (I):** This dichotomy describes how an individual focuses their energy. **Extraversion** signifies a preference for orienting attention outward toward the external world of people and activities, gaining energy from these interactions. Conversely, **Introversion** signifies a preference for orienting attention inward toward the inner world of thoughts, reflections, and concepts, gaining energy from solitude and internal processing.

**Sensing (S) versus Intuition (N):** This dichotomy describes how an individual gathers information. **Sensing** individuals prefer to rely on concrete, tangible facts, data, and information gathered directly through the five senses, focusing on the present reality. **Intuition** individuals prefer to focus on patterns, possibilities, future implications, and abstract concepts derived from internal insights and interpretations rather than direct observation.

**Thinking (T) versus Feeling (F):** This dichotomy describes how an individual makes decisions. **Thinking** involves making decisions based on objective, logical analysis, consistency, and impersonal criteria. The focus is often on truth and principles. **Feeling** involves making decisions based on subjective values, impact on people, harmony, and empathy. The focus is on what is right or fair according to personal or communal values.

**Judging (J) versus Perceiving (P):** This dichotomy, added by Briggs and Myers themselves (not directly from Jung), describes how an individual prefers to deal with the outer world. **Judging** individuals prefer to live in a decisive, organized, and planned way, seeking closure and structure.

**Perceiving** individuals prefer to live in a flexible, spontaneous way, keeping options open and adapting readily to new information and circumstances.

The combination of one preference from each of the four pairs results in 16 possible personality types (e.g., ISTJ, ENFP). The simplicity and apparent universality of this categorization are central to the instrument's popular appeal, providing a readily accessible lexicon for discussing personality differences without resorting to clinical labels. The test aims to determine the default preference, suggesting that attempting to use the non-preferred function requires more effort and may lead to greater stress or inefficiency, hence reinforcing the concept of a natural type.

#### 4. Applications in Vocational and Organizational Settings

The primary significance of the MBTI lies in its extensive application across various non-clinical domains, most notably in **organizational psychology** and career counseling. Proponents argue that understanding one's type preferences can significantly enhance career satisfaction and performance by aligning an individual's natural predispositions with the demands of a specific job role. For instance, a Thinking-Judging type might be deemed highly suitable for roles requiring systematic analysis and timely decision-making, such as engineering or law, while a Feeling-Perceiving type might thrive in creative or supportive roles like counseling or human resources.

Beyond individual career guidance, the test is frequently deployed in corporate environments for team building and leadership development. Organizations use the MBTI to help team members understand how others process information and make decisions, reducing conflict and improving communication. If a project team comprises both strong Sensing and strong Intuitive types, the framework encourages the team to value both the attention to factual detail (Sensing) and the strategic, big-picture thinking (Intuition). Furthermore, in leadership training, the MBTI is often used to illustrate various leadership styles, prompting managers to recognize that effective leadership requires adjusting communication methods to suit the preferences of diverse subordinates.

#### 5. Psychometric Status, Debates, and Criticisms

Despite the immense global popularity of the MBTI, particularly in corporate training settings, it faces significant and persistent skepticism within the professional psychometric and academic psychological communities. The most fundamental criticism revolves around its questionable reliability and validity when compared to established psychometric instruments like the Big Five personality traits model. Critics frequently categorize the MBTI as a **pseudoscience** due to its reliance on binary scales and its failure to meet stringent scientific standards.

A major concern is the concept of **test-retest reliability**. Research indicates that a substantial percentage of individuals who retake the MBTI after a relatively short period (e.g., five weeks) are classified into a different type category on at least one of the four dichotomies. This fluctuation

undermines the fundamental claim that the MBTI measures innate, stable preferences. Furthermore, the use of dichotomous, binary categories (E vs. I, T vs. F) is heavily contested. Most modern personality research views traits as falling along continuous dimensions, where most people cluster toward the middle. By forcing individuals into one category or the other, the MBTI sacrifices the nuance of continuous measurement and ignores the fact that a slight preference difference near the midpoint is treated with the same significance as a strong preference at the extreme ends of the scale.

## 6. The Lack of Predictive Validity and Alternative Models

Another profound critique focuses on the MBTI's lack of demonstrable **predictive validity**. Academic critics argue that the types generated by the instrument have not been reliably shown to predict success in specific careers, job satisfaction, or overall performance better than chance or simpler measures. While the instrument may offer an engaging framework for introspection, its practical utility in high-stakes selection or placement decisions is generally rejected by professional psychologists who favor instruments with stronger empirical backing.

Consequently, the MBTI often struggles when pitted against empirically derived models such as the Big Five personality traits (or OCEAN model) (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism). The Big Five model is derived through factor analysis of language descriptors and uses continuous scales, affording it robust statistical validity and reliability that the MBTI lacks. While the MBTI dimensions of Extraversion/Introversion align closely with the Big Five dimension of Extraversion, the remaining MBTI scales are often seen as conflating multiple distinct personality factors, thus reducing the precision and explanatory power of the resulting type classification.

### Further Reading

[The Myers & Briggs Foundation Official Website](#)

[Myers-Briggs Type Indicator \(MBTI\) on Wikipedia](#)

[Katharine Cook Briggs on Wikipedia](#)

[Isabel Briggs Myers on Wikipedia](#)