

About the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

The MBTI is based on Carl Jung's theory of psychological types. This was published in English in 1923 and two American women, Katharine Briggs and Isabel Myers, subsequently developed a questionnaire to help people understand themselves better. This eventually became the MBTI, which continues to be worked on and updated. It is the most widely used personality indicator in the world (other similar tools include Insights Discovery, TMP and Golden).

You may be aware of some recent negative coverage of the MBTI in the media. Some of the criticism arises from a misconception about what type is supposed to do and a misunderstanding about how the instrument works. Other criticisms suggest poor reliability or validity - many of these criticisms are addressed in the peer reviewed paper by Hackston and Moyleⁱ . and in other papers cited [here](#). Key points:

- There are hundreds of studies which show that the MBTI is both a reliable and valid toolⁱⁱ.
- The MBTI has good test-retest reliability, with 95% of people coming out the same on at least three of the four preference pairs and 79% coming out the same on all four.
- When people change their type on retest, it is usually only on one scale, and on scales where their clarity about their preference was low.
- The MBTI has construct validity (i.e. it measures what it is supposed to measure) and criterion related validity.
- Results on the MBTI correlate with four of the five factors in the Five Factor Modelⁱⁱⁱ of personality, which is widely accepted by academic psychologists.
- It is true that the MBTI does not have predictive validity (which is why it is not useful to academic psychologists). It is not intended to predict behaviour, so it should NEVER be used in selection for jobs. It also does not measure neuroticism, (which is why it is not useful to clinical psychologists).

What the MBTI does do was summed up by the British Psychological Society in their review^{iv}:

“The MBTI is an instrument which, in the hands of an experienced user, can facilitate a high degree of insight. Its strongest application on an individual basis is in counselling or developmental situations. In other work situations its best use is in promoting team development through discussion of the team members’ differing positive characteristics”.

Type is a theory about how your mind works – how you perceive, think and feel. It is not primarily about abilities or skills, nor about how you behave, which is influenced by many other factors.

The MBTI is a tool for self-awareness and self-development and for appreciating how other people are different from you. You can use this knowledge to build on your strengths and adapt how you interact, so you get on better both with yourself and with others.

ⁱ Penny Moyle and John Hackston (2018): “Personality Assessment for Employee Development: Ivory Tower or Real World?” *Journal of Personality Assessment* Vol 100 no 5, June 2018

ⁱⁱ *Reliability and Validity of the MBTI* Download <https://eu.themyersbriggs.com/en/tools/MBTI>

ⁱⁱⁱ NEO-PI <https://www.hogrefe.co.uk/shop/neo-personality-inventory-revised-uk-edition.html>

^{iv} British Psychological Society (2011) *Test Review Myers-Briggs Type Indicator®: Step One (MBTI®)*