



# Learning and personality type

Tips for students on how to take advantage of  
MBTI® personality strengths **for more effective  
learning and studying**

## Learning strategies for those preferring:

### Extraversion

People who have a preference for Extraversion (E) process information externally and may not spend much time thinking before they speak or act. That's because they best understand the world around them when they're actively involved in it. Their "sweet spot" involves plenty of opportunities to discuss, debate, question, and apply what they're learning. Here are four ways to become a stronger, more flexible learner:

- 1 Read the material out loud.** Sometimes a solo activity like reading can seem boring if you're easily distracted. It might even feel like the words on the page just bounce around in your head. Reading aloud gives them a place to go – and potentially helps you retain the information.
- 2 Start or participate in discussion groups.** Make your learning experience more interactive by forming a study group or finding a partner. If you can't get together in person, consider virtual options like Facebook groups, Slack channels, or Zoom meetings.
- 3 Limit your questions and comments.** To respect others' learning styles and stay focused, hold your questions or comments until the end of the lesson or class. If it helps, quickly jot down your questions while you take notes so you can stay on task and still remember what to ask later.
- 4 Gather sufficient information before you process it.** Before you dive into the learning material and all related activities, make sure you're not relying on incomplete information. It's only going to frustrate you.

### Introversion

People who have a preference for Introversion (I) process information internally and need more time to think about things on their own. They typically prefer a quiet, calm learning environment where they can concentrate without interruptions. Here are four ways to become a stronger, more flexible learner:

- 1 Find a quiet space.** Find opportunities to do what you do best: listen, observe, read, and contemplate. If possible, make sure you have a quiet space where you can clarify and consolidate information.
- 2 Protect your independence.** Since you value a quiet space, online classes might be your best bet to control your environment. If you do end up craving a bit of interaction, look for a study partner or virtual small group.
- 3 Read ahead when possible.** Group discussions are an important part of the learning experience. Try to get information in advance so you feel more comfortable if called on. Feel free to use phrases like, "let me think about that for a second" to let others know you need more time.
- 4 Speed things up when necessary.** When your schedule doesn't allow you to dive deep into a subject, figure out alternate ways to absorb the information (i.e., videos, summaries). Another introverted learner said, "There just wasn't enough time to read everything as carefully and thoroughly as I wanted to, so I adopted some strategies for skimming articles. It wasn't the way I wanted to learn, but I needed to do something to survive the course load."

## Learning strategies for those preferring:

### Sensing

People who have a preference for Sensing (S) focus on the facts first. When they learn new things, they want concrete examples and specific data to back up the material. Learning is most compelling to them when it's practical, realistic, and presented in sequential steps. Here are four ways to become a stronger, more flexible learner:

- 1 Summarize the material.** Sometimes your need for detail slows you down. Remember that not every detail will be relevant, so identify the main ideas first. Then pinpoint any supporting examples. One Sensing learner said, "When I read, I used to take notes that were almost as long as the chapter. Now I write down only the main ideas and not all the examples."
- 2 Engage your senses.** Appeal to your senses to make the learning experience more interactive. For example, turn memorization into songs or mnemonic devices, use different colored pens for notes, or wear a specific fragrance only when you study.
- 3 Know when long-term goals are necessary.** Short-term, practical goals are your bread and butter. But when an immediate application isn't evident, you'll need to focus on a long-term goal. One Sensing learner said, "I disliked theoretical learning, but I kept reminding myself that someday I'd be out there doing the work I want."
- 4 Use diagrams, tables, and charts.** Merge your need for organization with your preference for visual aids. One Sensing learner said, "I find it helpful to put complex information into tables or timelines to organize and understand it."

### Intuition

People who have a preference for Intuition (N) find possibility more interesting than reality. When they learn new things, they link information together to form patterns or theories. If the learning environment requires meticulous attention to detail or recalling sequential data, Intuitive types may lose interest. Here are four ways to become a stronger, more flexible learner:

- 1 Do whatever you can to retain the information.** Because you think conceptually, you may overlook important details. One Intuitive learner said, "It helps if I read aloud, highlight important sections, and write the material in my own words."
- 2 Use conceptual study aids.** Since your thought process already involves a lot of abstract thinking, map out those thoughts on paper with a flowchart or diagram. This will help organize the main ideas so you can add facts and details later.
- 3 Take it step-by-step.** When memorization isn't necessary, keep a list of steps or sequences to help you recall the information. One Intuitive learner said, "*I tend to forget the order, so I need to write down the steps so I can refer back to them rather than try to remember on my own.*"
- 4 Don't get stuck on tangential information.** Before you dive into that rabbit hole, ask yourself whether the tangent is actually relevant to what you're learning. If it's not, skip it for now so you don't waste time trying to re-focus later.

## Learning strategies for those preferring:

### Thinking

People who have a preference for Thinking (T) use logic to analyze information and make decisions. When they learn new things, their first instinct is to ask questions about the accuracy of the learning material, the credibility of the instructor, and whether the information is being presented objectively. Here are four ways to become a stronger, more flexible learner:

- 1 Lead with logic.** Some topics will be more challenging because they're theoretical or abstract. When that happens, try to pinpoint the most logical reasons for you to learn the material anyway. And when you have the freedom to choose, try to seek out subject matter and instructors that match your preferences for objectivity and credibility.
- 2 Be diplomatic.** Take the time to pose your questions or comments in a respectful way. This can keep group learning on track – especially among people who might misinterpret your candor as negative. One Thinking learner said, *"In many situations, I've learned it's better to not speak, debate, or challenge too directly."*
- 3 Remember that you don't have to challenge everything.** Your logical mind is your strength, but it can also be your downfall. Shift your focus from "how can I critique this idea?" to "what can I learn from this?"
- 4 Communicate your need for direct feedback.** Let instructors know you need clear, concise, corrective feedback. One Thinking learner said, *"I rarely find someone who gives me really incisive, probing feedback. I feel like saying, 'respect me and tell it to me straight.'"*

### Feeling

People who have a preference for Feeling (F) use subjective values to evaluate information and make decisions. When they learn new things, they want to know personal applications, consequences, and overall implications of the information. Here are four ways to become a stronger, more flexible learner:

- 1 Make the material matter.** Whatever the topic, learning will always matter more to you if you link it to something that's personally important. One Feeling learner said, *"I always ask myself how what I'm learning relates to me. It might seem somewhat self-absorbed, but unless I can relate what I'm learning to myself or others, it doesn't make sense or seem important."*
- 2 Seek out supportive instructors when possible.** It's empowering when you find a teacher or mentor who supports and encourages you in ways that align with your preferences. One Feeling learner said, *"My learning is enhanced by professors who display energy and passion for their work, who show genuine interest in their students, and display the desire to empower others."*
- 3 Be your own biggest fan.** You won't always have the supportive instructor you want. When that's the case, encourage yourself. When you are your own learning advocate, it might give you the confidence to adopt new skills.
- 4 Don't shut down when you feel discouraged.** One Feeling learner said, *"I recently participated in a group where I felt cut off and unacknowledged. I sat back, made little eye contact, and withdrew from interaction."* Learn from this person's mistake and advocate for yourself in situations like that. This could also be a good opportunity for you to practice giving direct feedback.

### Judging

People who have a preference for Judging (J) are structured and decisive. When they learn new things, they want to know what's expected of them so they can use their time and resources efficiently. Judging learners like when assignments and deadlines are clearly defined from the beginning. Here are four ways to become a stronger, more flexible learner:

- 1 Don't expect too much of yourself.** Because you run a tight ship, it can feel rewarding to pile more on your to-do list. Try not to overload your schedule or expect perfection. It will just set you up for frustration later. In group learning situations, make sure the division of tasks is fair.
- 2 Recognize when you need to take the reins.** Some instructors are pretty hands-off. When that happens, do whatever you need to adapt. One Judging learner said, *"College instructors didn't tell me what chapters I should be reading or remind me about upcoming assignments like my high school teachers did. It took me a while to figure out that I needed to read the course outlines carefully and manage the deadlines myself."*
- 3 Don't make decisions too quickly.** You probably like when things are done and decided. But making abrupt decisions can cause you to miss opportunities for additional learning. One Judging learner said, *"In class, we were required to provide several alternatives to resolve a situation. This felt so challenging because I just wanted to make a decision about what I thought was the best and only solution."*
- 4 Schedule some down time.** Last-minute interruptions can really throw a wrench in your efficient learning pace. If you leave some open time in your schedule, it can accommodate any unexpected changes so you can stress less.

### Perceiving

People who have a preference for Perceiving (P) are curious and exploratory. In a learning environment, they don't mind if things are left open-ended or if they need to adjust timelines as they go. Perceiving learners often defer decision-making to explore new information. Here are four ways to become a stronger, more flexible learner:

- 1 Keep your word.** In group learning environments, not everyone will feel comfortable starting a project at the last minute. To prevent conflict, communicate two important things with your group: what tasks you're personally responsible for and when you'll finish them.
- 2 Minimize distractions.** One of your best qualities is that you're open to new ideas. But if your search for additional information impedes your learning process, you'll need to block out the distractions. First, get clear about what you want to accomplish, and then do whatever it takes to get to that finish line. If it helps, try a Pomodoro Timer or listen to a neutral sound like Brown Noise while you work.
- 3 Communicate the importance of flexibility.** Some highly structured learning environments could use a bit of flexibility. When that's the case, try to negotiate or ask for some leeway. There's probably a compromise that could work for everyone.
- 4 Choose your learning environments wisely.** Certain subjects and settings are more conducive to your preferred learning style. One Perceiving learner said, *"Online courses are perfect for me. Participation feels less forced, and conversations with other people feel more natural. I actually look forward to my online classes."*