

# Teaching to Different Personality Types<sup>1</sup>

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This EDIS document is the first in a series on teaching to different personality types and provides a broad overview of how understanding and acknowledging personality types can assist in Extension program development. The entire series includes the following EDIS documents:

1. [\*Teaching to Different Personality Types\*](#)
2. [\*Using the Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator to Strengthen Extension Programs\*](#)
3. [\*Using the True Colors Personality Assessment to Strengthen Extension Programs\*](#)
4. [\*Using the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory to Strengthen Extension Programs\*](#)

## Introduction

No matter the context, Extension program participants' interests and ways of learning directly affect how they take in information. This calls on Extension educators to consider different teaching approaches based on the needs of who is sitting in the room. Participants whose preferences are different from your own may find it difficult to adjust to the learning atmosphere and the teaching methods of the educator. Therefore, we need to vary our teaching styles and approaches so we can motivate and teach a wider range of learners. Doing so means developing several approaches that better meet the needs of all learners.

While we cannot always take the time to find out what personality types our learners have, we can assume that we have a variety of types in the room every time we present information. Therefore, ensuring our approaches are applicable to all types can assist in knowledge and skill transfer and, hopefully, inspire our participants to take and implement what we are teaching. This publication series will focus on using different personality type assessments in your Extension education program.



Figure 1.

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## What are personality type assessments?

Personality assessments are questionnaires designed to reveal aspects of an individual's psychological makeup. The first personality assessments were developed in the 1920s, primarily to ease the process of personnel selection in the armed forces. Since then, though, many personality type assessments have been developed, including the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), True Colors, the Kiersey Temperament Sorter, the Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory, and the Personality and Preference Inventory. Due to the large number of personality type assessments available, this publication series will focus on a small number of assessments. Several of the more informal assessments are available for free online. For a more formal assessment, typically a certified professional administers the assessment and helps interpret the results.

## What are personality type preferences?

Personality type preferences represent a consistent and enduring pattern of how we use our minds or how we focus our attention. Studies and experience show

individuals have consistent psychological patterns. Someone may be energized by being around others, while someone else may be energized by spending time alone. Neither is wrong. A person can do both, but typically a person prefers one to the other.

There are two major reasons to learn about personality type preferences:

- To understand your own preferences better, including how they affect you, your communication style, your learning preferences, and how they differ from others
- To understand and appreciate others' personality preferences

Each personality preference has different strengths and challenges. By understanding our own and others' preferences, we can appreciate how everyone contributes in a given situation or task, or how everyone learns, which is the focus of this publication series.

## Which assessment is best for you?

As noted previously, many personality type assessments exist. For the purposes of this publication series, here are some reasons to select particular assessments. Each of the following is described in more detail in the rest of this series.

### Myers-Briggs Type Inventory (MBTI®)

One of the oldest and widely used personality assessments, the MBTI® (Briggs Meyers, McCaulley, Quenk, & Hammer, 2009) has been used by corporations across the globe to assess employees' personality preferences. Of the personality assessments discussed in this publication series, the MBTI® is probably the most widely recognized. The assessment provides a very detailed description of an individual's personality preferences, along with the strengths and challenges associated with that preference. One potential downside to the MBTI® is that people tend to forget the four-letter combination of their personality type scales (Extraversion/Introversion, Sensing/Intuition, Thinking/Feeling, Judging/Perceiving). The assessment is also fairly lengthy. Most times, a person will take the assessment and then a certified administrator will come back days or weeks later to interpret the results.

### True Colors™

True Colors was developed in 1978 as a way for people to easily remember their personality preference. True Colors (Miscinsin, 2010) uses four colors—Orange, Gold, Green, and Blue—to help people understand the motivations and behaviors relative to their own personalities and to mitigate potential conflict by learning to recognize their own and others' personality characteristics. The assessment is made up of sets of word clusters and typically takes less than 15 minutes to complete. The assessment and interpretation can be done in the same session. Learners who take True Colors quickly start describing themselves and others in "color talk."

### Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory (KAI)

The KAI is a measure of problem solving style and indicates a preference towards either adaption or innovation on a continuum (Kirton, 2011). Based on an overall score, a person is identified as either an adaptor or an innovator and assumptions can be made on how they approach solving problems by themselves or as a team. Just like True Colors, it is easy to remember whether you are an adaptor or innovator, and learners quickly start describing themselves using these terms.

## Summary

Thinking about personality type when developing Extension programs can assist us in producing educational experiences that resonate with all types of audiences. If you are interested, please feel free to visit the Center for Public Issues Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources contact page (<http://piecenter.com/contact>) to get in touch with Dr. Telg about administering personality type assessments to strengthen your Extension programs.

## References

- Briggs Myers, I., McCaulley, M. H., Quenk, N. L., & Hammer, A. L. (2009). *MBTI manual: A guide to the development and use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® Instrument* (3rd edition). CPP, Inc.
- Kirton, M. J. (2011). *Adaption-Innovation in the context of diversity and change*. Routledge, New York, NY.
- Miscinsin, M. (2010). *Showing our true colors* (3rd edition). True Colors International.

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