

# Using the True Colors Personality Assessment to Strengthen Extension Programs<sup>1</sup>

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This EDIS document is the third in a series on teaching to different personality types and provides a detailed explanation of the True Colors™ personality assessment and how it can be used to 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

Since its development in 1978, True Colors™ has become a popular personality type indicator because of its simplicity—it categorizes personality type with colors. Don Lowry took previous personality type concepts and applied them to the metaphors of colors—Gold, Green, Orange, and Blue—as the four temperaments. Results from other personality type indicators could be difficult to remember, Lowry said, so he wanted to develop an assessment that had results everyone could understand and remember. True Colors bases its assessment of personality on several tiers of

three-word clusters for people to choose from. By ranking the word cluster they most identify with through the one that they least identify with, respondents can easily and quickly see which of the four personality type “colors” they most closely align with. The True Colors personality type assessment can be answered in less than 20 minutes.

Lowry points out that each person is made up of all of the four personality color types, but that some colors “shine brighter” than others. The color with the highest point total in the True Colors assessment is the “brightest” color, while the one that scores the lowest is the “palest” color, and the two other colors emerge in varying “shades” (Miscisin, 2010). If a person’s brightest color is **Gold**, the person tends to have these characteristics: steadfast, loyal, traditional, rule follower or rule maker, parental, orderly, structured, punctual, and precise. Those scoring highest as **Orange** are adventurers and have a zest for life; they are charming, witty, and spontaneous, and like to entertain others. They have a hunger for excitement and light-heartedness.

**Blues** are relational. They are compassionate, romantic, empathetic, and nurturing; they see the best in others and like to please people. **Greens** are analytical. They are logical, rational, objective, knowledgeable, and self-controlled. The four personality types correspond roughly to some of the dichotomies in the Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator, which is discussed in *Using the Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator to Strengthen Extension Programs*: Thinking

1. This document is AEC572, one of a series of the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date September 2015. Reviewed September 2018. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
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(Green), Feeling (Blue), Judging (Gold), and Perceiving (Orange).

This document explains some characteristics of each personality color type as it relates to the learning environment, and it provides some suggested learning activities for each personality color type. Remember that though each person has all four colors, some are brighter or paler than the others. Someone may be a Gold>Blue>Orange>Green, while someone else may be a Blue>Green>Orange>Gold. By understanding personality differences and using different learning methods, you will be able to better reach multiple learners.

## Gold Learners

Gold learners love detail and order. They want clearly stated objectives because learning, for them, must have a purpose. They want step-by-step directions, scheduled deadlines, and recognition for a job well done. Gold learners also want everyone to be on task in the learning environment.

To be able to succeed in a learning environment, you may want to use activities that require organization, classification, and categorization and that link learning to past traditions. Gold learners like traditional content and a detailed lesson plan or a syllabus so they know what to expect. Other potential learning methods to include for Gold learners include memorization, quizzes, worksheets, and lectures.



Figure 1. Gold learners prefer deadlines and schedules.  
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## Orange Learners

Orange learners thrive in an active, hands-on environment. They want to have fun in an unstructured setting, as opposed to Gold learners, who like a very structured environment. Orange learners are independent and want to be part of the planning process in the learning environment. If there have to be rules, Orange learners would like

to be part of the process to negotiate those rules within a given framework.

Orange learners like to take field trips and appreciate opportunities to brainstorm. An Orange learner wants a learning topic to be relevant to them. They enjoy innovative, problem-solving exercises. Orange learners like to work with and manipulate real objects because they enjoy hands-on learning. Since orange learners are also competitive, they like activities, such as debates, that can be turned into a contest. Other potential learning methods to include for Orange learners include demonstrations, storytelling, activity-based instruction, and simulations.



Figure 2. Orange learners prefer unstructured settings where they can brainstorm ideas.  
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## Green Learners

Green learners prefer a quiet, uninterrupted learning environment. Green learners would like to have a brief overview of a topic and then proceed to a focused learning setting, during which they want the material covered in a logical presentation. Green learners would rather not waste time with games or relational activities; they want to get on with the learning. Green learners like to create new models, analyze graphs and charts, and use reasoning skills. They like lecture, debate, and individual study and research.

In the learning environment, Green learners expect opportunities to think critically and want opportunities to use outside information resources. They like to have a structured but adaptable lesson plan; they want to learn about topics that could be relevant to the overall topic at hand. Other potential learning methods to include for Green learners include reading alone, research, open-ended questions, debate, visualization (with the focus on future applications), and experiments.



Figure 3. Green learners prefer individual study and research.  
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## Blue Learners

Blue learners are relational. They prefer a safe, secure, and nonthreatening learning environment where warmth and friendliness is key. They enjoy active learning in a hands-on, cooperative atmosphere, rather than a competitive one, which appeals more to Orange learners. Blue learners want a lot of talk time built in to learning so they can share with others.

To help Blue learners succeed, consider using group work and discussion and creative exercises, such drawing, painting, or acting. Any way to integrate cooperative learning, for a Blue learner, is a plus. Other potential learning methods to include for Blue learners include role-play, recitation, group projects, and peer tutoring.



Figure 4. Blue learners prefer group work and discussion.  
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## 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 Drs. Lamm or Telg about administering the True Colors Assessment and other cognitive assessments to strengthen your Extension programs.

## Reference

Miscisin, M. (2010). *Showing our true colors* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). True Colors International.