

Exercises to illustrate Psychological Type preferences

The exercises described here are ones we have used to illustrate the concept of Psychological Type when running training courses and working with teams. The first exercise covers the basic concept of preference, followed by exercises for each of the letter preferences. These exercises assume that you know the Type of the people you are working with in advance or that the LSI or TDI will have been completed in advance of the session, so that you can use Type results to structure the groups.

Like all exercises designed to illustrate aspects of personality, they don't always work exactly as intended! In some cases this may be because the preferences of the people you are working with makes it difficult to put together two groups that clearly contrast in their psychological Type. Regardless of the outcome, however, most of the learning will take place through exploring the processes that the groups went through to reach their outcomes.

The basic concept of preference

Central to Jung's theory of Psychological Type is that we all have preferences in the way that we think and act. Probably the classic way to illustrate preference is to ask people to pick up a pen and write their name. When they have done this, ask them to put the pen in their other hand and then write their name. An alternative / additional way to demonstrate preference is to ask people to stand up and then stand on one leg. After a few seconds, ask them to stand on the other leg (without holding onto desks or chairs).

As with all exercises, even when they have not produced clear-cut illustrations of preference, examples of preference can always be found within the processes that the groups engaged in, if not the outcomes. Debriefing is therefore a central part of the exercises and is often a stage when most learning takes place as it allows people to 'step outside' of the group and reflect more objectively on the exercise and also compare perceptions with people from other groups.

After the exercise, ask people to reflect on how it felt writing with the non-preferred hand or standing on the non-preferred leg and give adjectives to describe it. Also ask people to look at the results of writing their name the two times – this illustrates the important point that we can all do both (as with all preferences described in Psychological Type), but that one is preferred, easier and more natural than the other.

To expand this exercise you can write the responses on a flipchart and, when you have collected between 8 or 12 adjectives, ask the group for opposites to the adjectives that have been given. This gives a column of adjectives describing how it feels when working with our preferences and how it feels when working outside of them, so illustrating some of the key features of preference.

Extraversion-Introversion

Using groups of between 6 and 12 people, give them the following exercise:

It is a good friend's birthday and you want to organise a surprise party for them.

Discuss in your groups what you would do, e.g.
where you would hold the party
what you would do
what kinds of entertainment you would put on
anything else you would want to happen

Debriefing

Ask groups to plan the party for about 10 minutes and then have each group describe their party to the other groups. Explore with groups:

- How easy was it to reach decisions about the party?
- Are they looking forward to the party?
- How people from different groups would feel about the parties planned by others.

Whether type-alike or mixed groups are used may impact on:

- Identifying who the person the party is being planned for
- How easy it was to agree about the party.

Additional exploration

With some groups we have used guided imagery to further explore the E-I preference in relation to the party exercise. This needs to be done after the concept of E-I has been introduced to the group.

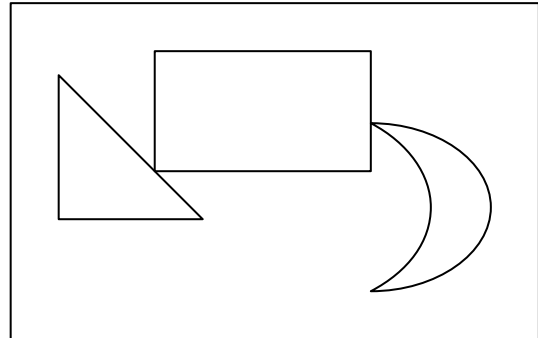
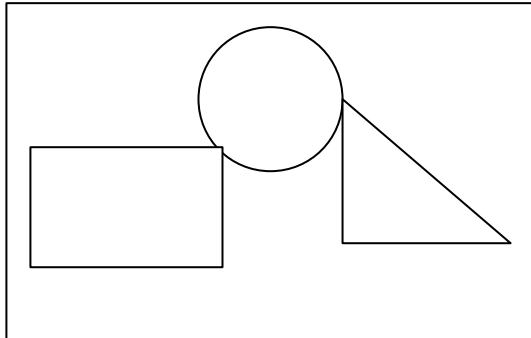
Ask people to close their eyes and imagine their friend arriving at the party; imagine them walking in to the room, how do they react, how do they feel? During the party, observe your friend. What are they doing, who are they interacting with, how are they feeling? At the end of the part how do they feel, are they tired or energised, when they look back on the party what will they remember?

Then repeat this exercise, but this time with a friend of the opposite preference (E or I) attending the same party. Then explore how 'appropriate' the party was for the different types and how they would have reacted to it.

Sensing-iNtuition

Identify a person with a S preference and a person with a N preference and ask if they would volunteer for this exercise. Ask one of these people to step outside of the room, whilst the other completes the exercise.

Prompt the group to have a blank piece of paper and a pen in front of them. Give the first volunteer a picture and ask them to describe it to the rest of the group so they can reproduce it. When complete, ask the second volunteer to rejoin the group and do the same exercise with a different picture (emphasise to the group that this picture is different from the first). You can use any type of picture as stimulus for this exercise, although it is probably best if they are not too complex – we have used collections of abstract shapes such as those below.



Debriefing

Explore what differences individuals noticed in the descriptions that each of the volunteers used (Ss will typically use precise, detailed descriptions, breaking down the pictures into their component parts, Ns will focus more on the overall picture and draw links between what they see and other images). Which of the descriptions did they prefer or find it easier to work from, and how successful were they in helping them reproduce the pictures accurately (show the group the pictures that were being described)?

Thinking-Feeling

Using groups of between 6 and 12 people, give them the following exercise:

You are to imagine that you are the manager of a school football team.

Your team is going on a European tour, but only 14 of the 18 children in the team can go. All of the children can go and all want to go.

In your groups, discuss how you will decide who will go on the tour and write down the criteria you would use to make your selection.

Debriefing

After about 10 minutes ask each group to give the criteria they would use to decide which of the 14 children they would go on the football tour. Explore the criteria that are given by asking:

- How easy was it to reach a consensus in your group?
- How happy are the individual group members with the outcome?

- How would their criteria work in practice – how would children be told if they were going on the tour or not?

Whether type-alike or mixed groups are used may impact on:

- The overall 'feel' of the criteria – are they 'harder' and based more around skills, the need to field the strongest team (more likely from Ts) or softer and more around who will get the most from the experience or even planning ways to take all 18 children (more likely from Fs).
- How easy it was to come to a conclusion about the criteria (mixed groups may find this very difficult and split into T and F camps).

Note: Due to the nature of this exercise, it may bring out some F elements even in the strongest Ts!

Judging-Perceiving

Using type-alike groups of between 6 and 12 people if possible, give them the following exercise:

Discuss what is important about developing a good plan before you start a project?

Write down: what you agree on as a group
what you differ on as a group

Put the items you agree on in order of importance.

Debriefing

After about 10 minutes ask each group to feed back: what they have agreed on, what they differ on and which of the items they agreed on they think are most important.

In type-alike groups compare the detail of the lists, the number of points that have been agreed on and how clear the order of importance is (Js will tend to have more detailed lists and to have made more progress with the whole task, Ps may find very little to say about the importance of a plan and come up with far fewer items on their lists). In mixed type groups, explore how they reached a consensus (if at all).