



How to Manage Seemingly Contradictory Facet Results on the MBTI® Step II™ Assessment

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Introduction

Sometimes when you are trying to apply the results of the MBTI® Step II™ assessment, they just don't seem to make sense. Here are some ideas to help you comprehend results that seem confusing—until you take a closer look.

As you work with clients to help them understand the most appropriate ways for them to flex their preferences, you can help them think about when to lean more on one facet than another, and also about combining different aspects of individual facet results. In some cases, analyzing seemingly contradictory results—whether between a client's preference and out-of-preference facet results (e.g., a Feeling preference with facet results of Critical and

Tough), or one in-preference and one out-of-preference facet result (e.g., Sensing facet results of Concrete and Imaginative)—can provide an opportunity to pick different aspects of those poles based on their effectiveness.

Following are some examples of such seemingly contradictory results—one for each preference—followed by questions to ask clients aimed at learning more about their effectiveness in blending aspects of those combinations. You can talk through with them how such combinations have enhanced their work and whether at times they have instead gotten in their way. Keep the dialogue open as they explore the best strategies for doing what works naturally and when to push beyond their comfort zone to try something different.

A close-up photograph of a green leaf, showing its intricate vein structure. The leaf is partially cut off by the top and right edges of the page.

Extraversion with Intimate and Expressive

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Combination #1:
a person who
prefers **Extraversion**
and has an out-of-
preference facet result of
Intimate and an in-preference
result of **Expressive**

“The selective and private revealer.”

You might think that if you scored toward the Intimate pole of the Gregarious–Intimate facet, you are likely a more private person who does not like to reveal personal information about yourself. We know that those people who score more toward Intimate than Gregarious tend to have just a handful of people they would “fight to the death” for, versus those on the Gregarious side, who may

have so many Facebook friends and colleagues on their LinkedIn page that they might not even know their names.

When we go back to the true root of Extraversion—gaining energy by connecting with others—we can imagine that when people who favor these facets are connecting with their close and trusted friends, they feel comfortable, energized, and relaxed. If we add their tendency to talk easily about how they feel, we might guess that this adds importance to those friendships. So even though Intimate Extraverts might not appear to be as social as Gregarious Extraverts, when they connect with their trusted friends and colleagues, they are able to share easily their thoughts and feelings.

Questions to ask:

- How long does it take for you to fully accept a new friend or colleague?
- What helps you feel more comfortable with new people in your life?
- What is the easiest way for you to feel a genuine connection with others?

Introversion with Expressive and Receiving

Combination #2:

a person who prefers
Introversion and has an
out-of-preference result
of **Expressive** and an in-
preference result of **Receiving**

"You first, then me."

Here's a little-known fact: some Introverts love to talk! When they are comfortable and want to connect with others, some Introverts have quite the penchant for conversation! In this case, Introverts with an out-of-preference score toward Expressive will be happy to share their thoughts and feelings with you—although you might have to initiate the conversation. Their score toward Receiving indicates that they tend to be somewhat reserved in

new situations and wait for people to
come to them rather than initiating
a conversation.

And be careful what you wish for—when Expressive
Introverts get started, they have plenty to say
about what they are thinking and feeling. They
may need a little jump-start, with you reaching out
by speaking first, but once the contact has been
established and they are comfortable, buckle up
and get ready for a lively conversation!

Questions to ask:

- How do you balance waiting for others to connect with your interest in connecting?
- Do you ever feel as though you said too much after you were approached by someone to engage in conversation?
- How can you push yourself to manage the discomfort of starting more conversations with others?

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Sensing with Imaginative and Concrete

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Combination #3: a **Sensing** type with an out-of- preference facet result of **Imaginative** and an in- preference result of **Concrete**

"What you see is *not* what you get."

Even though the Concrete–Abstract facet is the first and "core" facet of the Sensing–Intuition preference pair, it does not dictate a Sensing type's entire process of taking in and experiencing information. People who score toward the Concrete pole start by asking, "What is, and what isn't?" and gathering facts about what they believe to be true. When they also score toward the Imaginative pole of the Realistic–Imaginative facet,

they then take those facts and play with new ways of combining them to do something different and coming up with a new method, product, target, or practice. So the Concrete information lays the groundwork for coming up with a new and different way of looking at the world.

Questions to ask:

- What helps you cross the bridge from “what is” to “what could be”?
- How do you confirm what is “truth” or “reality”?
- How does learning the facts first help you be creative?

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Intuitive with Experiential and Original

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Combination #4: an **Intuitive** type with an out-of- preference facet result of **Experiential** and an in- preference result of **Original**

"My way is the highway."

At first it might seem that Intuitive people, who focus on innovative ideas and the big picture, would prefer to experiment with new and different things rather than stick with what they know. But there is a connection between actively seeking information, getting involved, and creating something new.

The expression of the Original facet pole is actually the practice of exploring and playing with information, as well as experimenting with the

possibilities of a different and
better way of doing something.

Clients who score toward the Experiential pole of the Experiential–Theoretical facet, and the Original pole of the Traditional–Original facet, are showing trust in themselves, whether because of an experience they’ve had or because they believe in their ability to create something by trying out new things. With the Experiential pole, clients trust the experience because it happened to them personally. With the Original pole, they are trying to create their own way of doing something instead of relying on the tried and true.

Questions to ask:

- When do you trust things more—when they happen to you, or when you create them yourself?
- How have you grown by pushing yourself to adapt or change?
- What value do you tend to bring to others with your new ideas?

Thinking with Accommodating and Accepting

Combination #5: a **Thinking** type with out-of-preference results of **Accommodating** and **Accepting**

"When in Rome..."

Sometimes this combination of out-of-preference results can be explained by a culture that has more of a collective than an individual perspective about getting things done. Even when people are thinking things through logically, they can approach their decision making by looking at the big picture and considering the greater good—as long as it makes sense.

People with this combination see the value of supporting the group, and even going along with things, but still make decisions logically.

Questions to ask:

- Does it sometimes feel disrespectful to push back, even when you don't share the same opinion?
- When do you choose to speak up versus letting something go?
- Have you ever regretted going along with the group when you later discovered that your perspective was correct?

Combination #6: a **Feeling** type with out-of-preference facet results of **Critical** and **Tough**

"I'm putting my foot down!"

Most people perceive individuals with a preference for Feeling as being engaged and interested in creating harmony and getting along with others.

Often Feeling types strive for a "win-win" in the hopes that everyone can be happy. However, when a person's overall preference for Feeling interacts

with the Critical and Tough facet poles, it's not a

contradiction but rather an indication of that

individual's dedication to upholding his

or her deeply cherished values. We

can remind ourselves that the

Thinking–Feeling preference pair represents the judging process, which drives how we make decisions. Individuals with a preference for Feeling tend to base their decisions on their beliefs and values. If those individuals also have Critical and Tough facet results, when an issue challenges their core beliefs they can come across as argumentative and even somewhat rigid at times.

The Critical pole indicates that they will stick to their guns and offer little compromise in their decisions. The Tough pole indicates that they likely will not waver or change their mind on a decision they have already made. So while it might be surprising to meet a person who prefers Feeling but scores toward the Critical

and Tough poles, it is actually a great example of a person who is likely to stand up for what he or she believes is important. Feeling types with these facet results advocating for a cause are not playing around—they will stand their ground until the job is done.

Questions to ask:

- How can you step back and gain perspective when you have already made up your mind?
- How often do you give people another chance to explain themselves and their opinions?
- Are there times when the mission, cause, or principle becomes more important than the relationship? Where is the balance between the two?

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Judging with Casual and Scheduled

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Combination #7: a **Judging** type with an out-of- preference facet result of **Casual** and an in-preference result of **Scheduled**

"Time is on my side (Yes it is!)."

For someone to favor both Casual and Scheduled seems like an impossibility. However, what the Casual pole speaks to is how people react to distractions or interruptions that force them to go outside the prescribed schedule. Judging types who favor this out-of-preference pole like to be flexible about how quickly things get done and are okay with jumping from one idea to another as it comes to them. People who score toward the

Scheduled pole like to control how they spend their time, and they also like to control the pace. But if they also favor the Casual pole, they might decide to be relaxed about pace. And it is likely that they will pad their schedule to allow for distractions so their process does not get derailed.

Questions to ask:

- How is your expression of the Casual pole affected when you are “in the grip” of stress?
- Do deadlines affect how susceptible you are to distractions?
- Is your efficiency ever affected by your more casual pace?

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Perceiving with Planful and Emergent

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Combination #8: **a Perceiving** type with an out-of- preference facet result of **Planful** and an in-preference result of **Emergent**

"Don't you worry 'bout a thing."

How can you express both Planful and Emergent at the same time? For some people it appears to be natural. They will put together a solid plan ahead of time, before a project begins, so that when they are in the thick of it they will have many options for managing whatever comes up during the course of implementing the project. Their Emergent style allows for flexibility within the plan, but planning on the front end helps

them feel more comfortable when flexibility becomes a necessary part of the process. The combination of structure and flexibility ensures that the best steps will be taken to deliver quality work and success.

Questions to ask:

- How do you decide when to reinforce the plan and when to go with the flow?
- What kinds of information do you gather before creating the plan?
- What do you do when you are presented with new information after you have already begun to implement the plan?

Going Forward

The Step II assessment has so many possible combinations of results that it can be confusing for clients and practitioners alike. As a practitioner, you'll want to have a conversation with your clients about what behaviors related to their facet results might look like, and whether they are using those behaviors in a way they find helpful. Remember, each person expresses the facets differently, so you may hear different kinds of stories from different people with the same seemingly contradictory facet results. The goal is to keep a dialogue going to help clients deepen their understanding of their type and of themselves as a whole.