

# INTP

PREMIUM PROFILE



16 Personalities

## *What Will You Find in This Profile?*

This profile is designed to cover all the main aspects of your personality and areas of your life – your type description, relationships, academic path, career and professional development, your communication and friend-making skills, parenting tips and advice, and much, much more. It combines the personality type theory with practical, real-world advice coming directly from other people who share your personality type.

Personality types have been the topic of many discussions, some of them dating back to ancient times – and it is wise to draw from that source of knowledge and experience, especially when you are unsure how to handle a particular situation. This kind of knowledge gives you a lot of power – power to control and understand yourself. As Aristotle said millennia ago, “the hardest victory is the victory over self”. Consider this profile your battle plan.

## What Does It Mean to Be an INTP?

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INTPs belong to the **Analyst** type group, along with ENTJs, ENTPs and INTJs. They have an Introverted, Intuitive, Thinking and Prospecting personality:

Introverted – INTPs listen carefully, prefer solitary activities, feel more comfortable when alone than when around other people and get exhausted by social interaction.

Intuitive – INTPs are introspective, rely on their imagination, are absorbed in ideas and focus on what might happen as opposed to what is happening or has already happened.

Thinking – INTPs are tough, follow their minds, suppress their feelings and emotions, and focus on objectivity and rationality.

Prospecting – INTPs are very good at improvising, prefer keeping their options open, are relaxed about their work, and seek freedom.

All Analysts prefer ideas to facts and focus on whatever works best.

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## *The Puzzle of Personality*

Often the very first question people ask after completing our personality test is “What do these four letters mean?” We are of course referring to those mysterious acronyms like INTP, ENFP, or ESTJ. As you may have already read in the free Type Descriptions or additional articles available on our website, each letter refers to a specific trait, with an additional variant listed at the end. But before we discuss those traits, let’s first take a brief historical detour.

Since the dawn of time, we have tried to describe and categorize ourselves in many ways. From the four temperaments of the Ancient civilizations – sanguine, choleric, melancholic and phlegmatic – to the latest advances in psychology, people have been restless in their pursuit of a good, reliable way to fit something as complex and fluid as human personality into a well-defined model. We are still some time away from being able to do that, although the current models account for the majority of our personality traits and can often predict with a high degree of confidence how we are likely to behave in specific circumstances.

That said, it is important to bear in mind that regardless of which model we rely on, our personality is just one aspect of many – our actions are also influenced by our environment, experience, and individual goals. In these profiles, we describe how people belonging to a specific personality type are *likely* to behave – however, remember that these are just indicators and tendencies, not definitive guidelines or answers. There’s a big difference between scoring 10% on a trait, and scoring 80%. This information is meant to inspire personal growth and better understanding of others, not to be taken as gospel.

Our approach has its roots in two different philosophies. One dates back to early 20<sup>th</sup> century and was the brainchild of Carl Gustav Jung, the father of analytical psychology. Jung’s theory of psychological types is perhaps the most influential creation in personality typology, and it has inspired a number of different theories, including our own. One of Jung’s key contributions was the development of the concept of *Introversion* and *Extraversion* – he theorized that each of us falls into one of these two categories, either focusing on the internal world (Introvert) or the outside world (Extravert). These terms are usually defined differently nowadays, with Extraversion being synonymous with social prowess – however, the original Jungian definitions focused on where the person tends to get their energy from. In that sense, Introversion does not imply shyness, and Extraversion does not necessarily mean good social skills.

Besides Introversion and Extraversion, Jung also coined several additional concepts. The ones most relevant to us are the so-called *Judging* functions (either *Thinking* or *Feeling*) and *Perceiving* functions (either *Sensing* or *Intuition*). According to Jung, each person prefers one of these cognitive functions and finds it most natural to rely on it in everyday situations. However, other functions also have their place and can emerge depending on the circumstances. These functions are also defined by the person's Introversion or Extraversion – e.g. someone whose dominant function is Introverted Feeling is likely to think differently from someone with Extraverted Feeling at the helm.

In the 1920s, Jung's theory was noticed by Katharine Cook Briggs, who later co-authored one of the most popular personality indicators used today, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®). Briggs was a teacher with an avid interest in personality typing, having developed her own type theory before learning of Jung's writings. Together with her daughter, Isabel Briggs Myers, they developed a convenient way to describe the order of each person's Jungian preferences – this is how the four-letter acronyms were born. There were four possible pairs of personality traits:

- Introversion (I) or Extraversion (E)
- Intuition (N) or Sensing (S)
- Thinking (T) or Feeling (F)
- Judging (J) or Perceiving (P)

You'll recall these terms from the paragraphs dedicated to Jung. According to the Myers-Briggs model, the first letter determines the *attitudes* of the dominant and subsequent functions, while the last letter shows which function *is* dominant. For Extraverts, the dominant function is focused on the outside world. J means that one of the Judging functions (Thinking or Feeling) is dominant; P points to one of the Perceiving functions (Intuition or Sensing). For Introverts, J and P show the auxiliary rather than dominant function – the dominant function itself is internalized. Of course, this is just a very simplified description of the Myers-Briggs theory – readers interested in learning more should read “Gifts Differing: Understanding Personality Type” by Isabel Briggs Myers.

Due to its simplicity and ease of use, the four-letter naming model is now shared by a number of diverse theories and approaches, such as Socionics, Keirsey Temperament Sorter®, Linda Berens' Interaction



Styles and many others. However, it is important to remember that while these acronyms may be identical or very similar, their meanings do not always overlap. One of the reasons behind such a lengthy introduction is that we want to make it clear that there is no single definition assigned to these type concepts – each theory defines them in their own way and it is entirely possible that if you meet five people who all say “I am an INFJ”, their definitions of what INFJ means are going to differ. There is certainly a lot of overlap between the theories sharing these type names – however, their type descriptions are by no means identical.

But let’s leave the typological theories aside for a moment. A different way to look at people’s personalities is through the lens of a *trait-* rather than *type-based* model. What do we mean by that? Instead of attempting to create 4 (or 8, 16, 32...) type constructs and fit people within them, we could simply define a number of traits and measure people’s preferences using well-defined scales, looking at their scores but not categorizing them. You may have heard the term *Ambivert*, which is a perfect example in this case. Ambiversion means that someone is more or less directly in the middle of the Introversion-Extraversion scale, being neither too social or outgoing, nor too withdrawn – which flies in the face of Jungian models described above. Every type-based theory is likely to have difficulties categorizing people whose scores end up right on the dividing line, regardless of how many dividing lines you have.

Trait-based theories would simply say that an Ambivert is a moderately Extraverted person and leave it at that, without assigning them a personality type. Such an approach certainly makes it much easier to reliably measure correlations between personality traits and other characteristics (e.g. political attitudes), which is why trait-based approaches dominate psychometric research – but that’s it, more or less. Unlike with type-based theories, it becomes impossible to define categories and types which could then be used as easily accessible concepts for discussions and recommendations. Consequently, while categories such as Extravert or Introvert are unavoidably limiting, they also give us a chance to describe a significant part of human personality and create theories that attempt to explain *why* we do what we do – something that a more scientifically reliable, but nondescript statement such as “you are 37% Extraverted” simply cannot do.

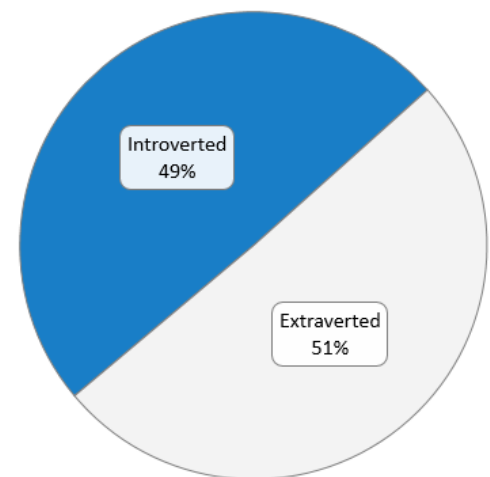
With our model, we've combined the best of both worlds. We use the acronym format introduced by Myers-Briggs due to its simplicity and convenience – however, we have redefined several Jungian traits and introduced an additional one, simplifying our model and bringing it closer to the latest developments, namely the dimensions of personality called the Big Five personality traits. Furthermore, unlike Myers-Briggs or other theories based on the Jungian model, we have not incorporated cognitive functions such as Extraverted Thinking or Introverted Sensing, or their prioritization, instead choosing five independent scales and building our types around them. This has allowed us to achieve high test accuracy while also retaining the ability to define and describe distinct personality types.

Let us now go through our five personality aspects one by one. The pie charts in each section will show the estimated distribution of each trait, based on our research and testing data.

## Five Personality Aspects

*Mind: Introverted vs. Extraverted*

It is safe to say that this is probably the oldest notion in the history of personality theories. It has long been observed that some people are expressive, outgoing and comfortable in social situations – while others are reserved, quiet and more comfortable alone. It is as if the former (Extraverted individuals) sincerely enjoy engaging with the external world and recharge by communicating with other people, and the latter (Introverted individuals) prefer to rely on themselves and their own inner world instead of seeking stimulation from the outside. However, being Extraverted does not necessarily imply that the person will be an excellent public speaker; likewise, being Introverted does not mean that the individual is bound to be clumsy or antisocial. Rather, this trait shows the average degree of expressiveness and the overall tendency to seek stimulation from one or the other source.

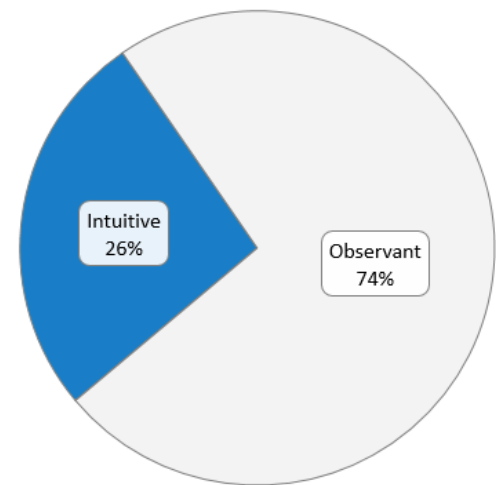


INTPs are Introverted – this is why they are usually self-sufficient, have little desire to make lots and lots of friends, prefer working with ideas rather than people, and don't put a lot of emphasis on social skills.

Again, these are just tendencies and likely consequences, not black-and-white, unchangeable traits. For instance, INTPs are perfectly capable of honing their social skills and becoming experts in negotiation or small talk – however, these skills would be used out of necessity, not because they find them natural or exciting. Socializing depletes INTPs' internal energy reserves quite quickly, and they always need to be able to return to their home base to recharge when that happens.

### *Energy: Intuitive vs. Observant*

All personality types can be divided into groups of those who favor the Intuitive energy style (more interested in ideas, focusing on the inner world) and those of the Observant energy style (more interested in facts and observable things, focusing on the external world). In our opinion, this dichotomy is the most important – while the other four determine how you interact with the world (Introverted / Extraverted), make decisions (Thinking / Feeling) and schedule your activities (Judging / Prospecting), the chasm between Intuitive and Observant individuals is far more significant as it actually determines how you see the world and what kind of information you focus on. It may seem like your decisions are the most important, but a decision is only as good as the understanding that backs it up.



Individuals with the Intuitive preference prioritize introspection, relying on their imagination, ideas and theories. They dream, fantasize and question why things happen the way they do, always feeling slightly detached from the actual, concrete world. One could even say that these individuals never actually feel as if they truly belong to this world. They may observe other people and events, but their mind remains directed both inwards and somewhere beyond – always questioning, wondering and making connections.

In contrast, individuals with the Observant trait focus on observing the actual world. They enjoy seeing, touching, feeling and experiencing things – and leave theories to others. They want to keep their feet on the ground and focus on the present, instead of wondering why or when something might happen.

Consequently, people with this preference tend to be better at dealing with facts, tools and concrete objects as opposed to introspecting or theorizing.

These traits determine the communication style as well – Intuitive individuals talk about ideas and have no difficulties with allusions or reading between the lines, while Observant types focus on facts and practical matters. This is why Intuitive types are likely to find it quite challenging to understand someone with the Observant trait, maybe even thinking that the latter is materialistic, unimaginative and simplistic. Likewise, an Observant individual is likely to think that their Intuitive conversation partner is impractical, naïve and unobservant. Both sets of assumptions can be quite damaging and it takes a mature person to get past them – but statements like these are fairly common.

INTPs are Intuitive individuals – this is why they are so good at coming up with plans, strategies and ideas. People with this personality type spend far more time engaging in various internal discussions than observing concrete things around them. INTPs are not that concerned about what is happening – they focus on what might happen or why something has happened. This is the skill INTPs keep improving throughout their lives, which makes them bright and imaginative thinkers.

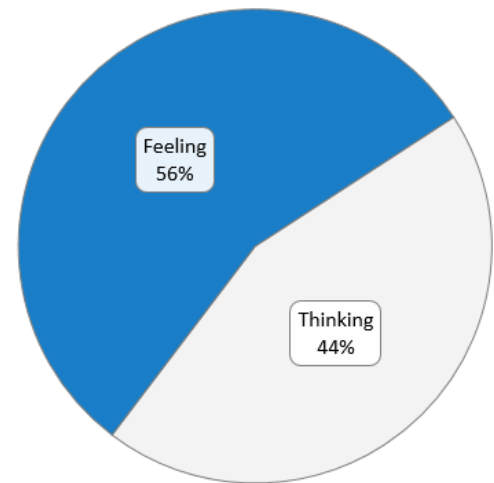
Of course, every stick has two ends. Introspection comes at a cost – by directing all their mental resources inwards, INTPs inevitably have to discard the information that is being provided by their senses. They are likely to have difficulties dealing with concrete, practical matters, or managing large collections of facts – even missing things happening right under their nose if they are not paying attention. This is also one of the reasons INTPs tend to have so many difficulties finding a partner – as the majority of the population have the Observant trait, people with this personality type often find it very challenging to connect with others.

#### *Nature: Thinking vs. Feeling*

This trait determines how we make decisions and cope with emotions. People with the Thinking trait seek logic and rational arguments, relying on their head rather than their heart. They also do their best to safeguard their emotions, shielding them from the outside world and making sure that they are not clearly visible. “Whatever happens, you must always keep a cool head” – this is the motto of Thinking types.

In contrast, people with the Feeling trait follow their hearts and emotions and care little about hiding them. From their perspective, we should not be afraid to listen to our innermost feelings and share them with the world – these individuals tend to be compassionate, sensitive and highly emotional.

That being said, it is important not to make the mistake of thinking that the first group is cold-blooded and indifferent, and that the second one is sentimental and irrational. This is a false dichotomy – people with the Thinking trait are often just as emotional as those with the Feeling trait, they simply try to hide and suppress their emotions; and people with the Feeling trait are fully capable of being rational, although they are likely to use different arguments, putting compassion and cooperation above efficiency and hard facts. It is unreasonable to dismiss or disparage either of these perspectives – both are perfectly valid.



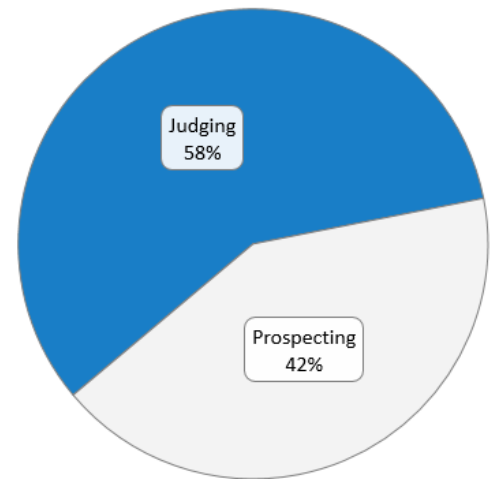
INTPs belong to the Thinking group – they trust and prioritize logic, relying on rational arguments and doing everything they can to keep their true feelings and emotions deep below the surface. As already mentioned in the previous section, people with this personality type are renowned for their use of the “is this going to work?” filter regardless of the circumstances – an INTP will question everything, starting with their teachers’ methods and ending with the prospects of their romantic relationships. The Intuitive and Thinking traits form the core of the INTP personality, making them highly intelligent, open-minded and utilitarian individuals, capable of amazing intellectual feats, especially in scientific or technological fields. However, they also push INTPs away from the majority of the population, making it difficult for them to relate to other people, especially when it comes to handling emotions.

### *Tactics: Judging vs. Prospecting*

This set of traits determines how we approach planning and available options. People with the Judging preference do not like to keep their options open – they would rather come up with five different contingency plans than just go ahead and deal with the challenges as they come. They prefer clarity and closure, always going with the plan rather than the flow. People with this trait likely keep a checklist,

and when something is crossed off that list, it is done and not open to reassessment. This goes as much for groceries (“Was it on the list?”) as it does for life goals, like buying a house. Furthermore, these individuals also tend to have a very strong work ethic, putting their duties and responsibilities above everything else.

In contrast, Prospecting individuals are always scanning for opportunities and options, willing to jump at them at a moment’s notice. People with this preference are perfectly aware that life is full of possibilities and are reluctant to commit to something that might well prove to be an inferior option in the future. They are also likely to focus more on what makes them happy as opposed to what their parents, employers, or teachers expect – if a specific task is not that important or interesting, a Prospecting individual will always be able to come up with something better to do.



INTPs are Prospecting individuals – they want to be able to look for alternative options, knowing that there is always a better way. This may lead to unfinished projects or missed deadlines, but INTPs would rather take that risk than lock themselves into a position where the existing commitments would limit their freedom. INTPs also tend to be quite relaxed about their immediate surroundings – they do not obsess over tidiness, often paying far more attention to their latest mental exercise. Finally, people with this personality type are likely to have a relaxed attitude towards their work or studies, refusing to get stressed about deadlines, templates, or rules.

### *Identity: Assertive vs. Turbulent*

You may have noticed that we did not highlight either of these options, unlike before – this is because this particular trait affects all others, showing how confident you are in your abilities and decisions. Assertive individuals are emotionally stable, calm, relaxed and refuse to worry too much about minor matters. In contrast, individuals with Turbulent identity tend to care about their image, be self-conscious, success-driven and perfectionists. This does not necessarily mean that having an Assertive identity is better – for instance, Turbulent individuals perform better in certain roles as they push themselves to

achieve superior results, while Assertive ones do not care about the outcome that much. However, Assertive individuals tend to benefit from higher emotional stability and increased self-confidence.

## Type Groups

Now you know what each type consists of. But how do they fit together?

Our system has two layers: the first (inner) one defines our **Roles**, the second (outer) one – our **Strategies**.

### *Roles*

The Role layer determines our goals, interests and preferred activities. Each of the four roles covers a set of personality types that are very similar; we will use these groups later in this profile to draw contrasts and similarities between personalities. They also serve to highlight the importance we have placed on the Energy trait – each personality type will share either the Observant or the Intuitive trait with all other members of their group, as well as one other key trait.

#### *ANALYSTS (INTUITIVE AND THINKING [ \_NT\_ ] TYPES, BOTH ASSERTIVE AND TURBULENT VARIANTS)*

These personality types embrace rationality and impartiality, excelling in intellectual debates and scientific or technological fields. They are fiercely independent, open-minded, strong-willed and imaginative, approaching many things from a utilitarian perspective and being far more interested in what works than what satisfies everybody. These traits make Analysts excellent strategic thinkers, but also cause difficulties when it comes to social or romantic pursuits.

#### *DIPLOMATS (INTUITIVE AND FEELING [ \_NF\_ ] TYPES, BOTH ASSERTIVE AND TURBULENT VARIANTS)*

Diplomats focus on empathy and cooperation, shining in diplomacy and counselling. People belonging to this type group are cooperative and imaginative, often playing the role of harmonizers in their workplace or social circles. These traits make Diplomats warm, empathic and influential individuals, but also cause issues when there is a need to rely exclusively on cold rationality or make difficult decisions.

#### *SENTINELS (OBSERVANT AND JUDGING [ \_SJ\_ ] TYPES, BOTH ASSERTIVE AND TURBULENT VARIANTS)*

Sentinels are cooperative and highly practical, embracing and creating order, security and stability wherever they go. People belonging to one of these types tend to be hard working, meticulous and



traditional, and excel in logistical or administrative fields, especially those that rely on clear hierarchies and rules. These personality types stick to their plans and do not shy away from difficult tasks – however, they can also be very inflexible and reluctant to accept different points of view.

#### *EXPLORERS (OBSERVANT AND PROSPECTING [ \_S\_P ] TYPES, BOTH ASSERTIVE AND TURBULENT VARIANTS)*

These types are the most spontaneous of all and they also share the ability to connect with their surroundings in a way that is beyond reach of other types. Explorers are utilitarian and practical, shining in situations that require quick reaction and ability to think on your feet. They are masters of tools and techniques, using them in many different ways – ranging from mastering physical tools to convincing other people. Unsurprisingly, these personality types are irreplaceable in crises, crafts and sales – however, their traits can also push them towards undertaking risky endeavors or focusing solely on sensual pleasures.

#### *Strategies*

The Strategy layer shows our preferred ways of doing things and achieving goals. There are four strategies:

#### *CONFIDENT INDIVIDUALISM (INTROVERTED AND ASSERTIVE [ I\_\_\_ (A) ] TYPES)*

Confident Individualists prefer doing things alone, choosing to rely on their own skills and instincts as opposed to seeking contact with other people. They know what they are good at and have high self-confidence. These personality types firmly believe that personal responsibility and trust in yourself are very important values. Confident Individualists do not pay much attention to other people's opinions and prefer to rely on themselves.

#### *PEOPLE MASTERY (EXTRAVERTED AND ASSERTIVE [ E\_\_\_ (A) ] TYPES)*

People Masters seek social contact and tend to have very good communication skills, feeling at ease in social events or in situations where they need to rely on or direct other people. These types are confident in their abilities and do not hesitate to express their opinions. Playing an active role in the society and knowing what makes other people tick mean a lot for People Masters; however, they are not too concerned about what other people think about them.



*CONSTANT IMPROVEMENT (INTROVERTED AND TURBULENT [ I\_\_\_ (T) ] TYPES)*

Constant Improvers are quiet, individualistic people. They tend to be perfectionistic and success-driven, often spending a lot of time and effort making sure that the result of their work is the best it can be. As their name says, Constant Improvers are high achieving individuals dedicated to their craft – however, they also tend to worry too much about their performance.

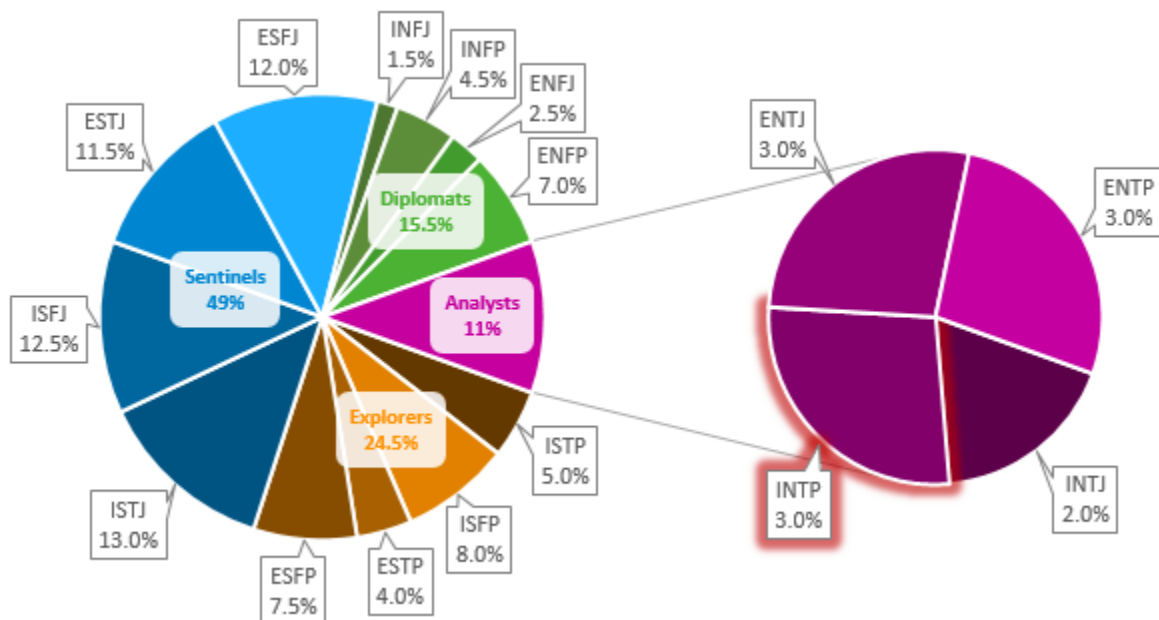
*SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT (EXTRAVERTED AND TURBULENT [ E\_\_\_ (T) ] TYPES)*

The last strategy is adopted by sociable, energetic and success-driven types. Social Engagers tend to be restless, perfectionistic individuals, prone to experiencing both very positive and very negative emotions. Their curiosity and willingness to work hard also mean that they are usually high-achieving, even if quite sensitive people. Types favoring this strategy also tend to place a lot of importance on other people's opinions; they value their social status and are eager to succeed in everything they do.

With all this in the background, let's now proceed to discussing your personality type and its place in the world!

## Type Overview

The INTP personality type is one of the rarest and most interesting types. Only about 3% of Americans are believed to be INTPs – averaging 4-5% among men and 1-2% among women. These percentages seem to vary across regions – for instance, countries in Asia tend to have higher percentages of Introverted and Thinking types, with locations like Hong Kong or Singapore also leaning towards a higher number of Intuitive individuals. Furthermore, INTPs are significantly overrepresented in the virtual world, often accounting for 25% or more of the participants in a specific forum or community site (e.g. Reddit.com).



“Philosophers”, “architects”, “dreamy professors”; these epithets are most often used to describe the INTP personality type. INTPs love theories and believe that everything can be analyzed and improved. They are not that concerned about the real world and practical things – from the INTPs’ perspective, that is often less exciting than ideas and intellectual pursuits. People with this personality type have no difficulties noticing patterns where others cannot – this makes them brilliant theorists and analysts. Not surprisingly, there is usually little middle ground with strongly expressed INTP personalities – other types either find their quirkiness mysterious and attractive, or feel uncomfortable and become offended. The INTPs themselves rarely care about being seen as eccentrics, staying true to their arguments and convictions instead of trying to mimic the behavior of other people. These attitudes soften as they grow and develop, but they tend to be very black-and-white at a younger age.

Accumulated knowledge is the most valued asset of any INTP. Imagine an immensely complicated clockwork which is constantly absorbing, processing and generating all kinds of theories – this is how the INTP mind works. People with the INTP personality type possess the most logically precise mind of all personality types – they can easily notice even the tiniest discrepancies between two statements, no matter how much time has passed in between. It is a bad idea to lie to an INTP. They may appear dreamy sometimes, but this is not because their mind is resting – quite the opposite. This is also the primary source of their self-confidence – like other Analysts, INTPs take pleasure in being able to rely on their huge archive of knowledge spanning many different topics and areas. People with this personality type tend to lean towards scientific or technological subjects, but there are plenty of exceptions – INTPs' skills can be applied successfully in many different fields, as long as they have an opportunity to devise and improve some kind of system.

INTPs are enthusiastic and impartial when it comes to dealing with problems – they drill through the details and then develop a unique approach, and ultimately a viable solution. INTPs are usually very intelligent and insightful people, able to remain unbiased in any situation. They absolutely love new ideas and theories and would never miss an opportunity to discuss them with other people. However, this never-ending thinking process also makes them look somewhat pensive and detached – INTPs are perfectly capable of conducting full-fledged debates in their own heads.

People with this personality type may also find it quite difficult to explain their thoughts to others, especially when it becomes obvious that their theories are not easily graspable. INTPs may also move on to another topic before their co-workers or partners have figured out what the INTP wanted to say. INTP personalities really have no limits when it comes to theoretical riddles. If there is no easy solution and the topic is interesting enough, an INTP can spend ages trying to come up with a solution. However, INTPs cannot stand routine work – they would much rather tackle a difficult theoretical problem.

INTP personalities are usually shy and reluctant when it comes to meeting other people. However, INTPs can also be very friendly and confident when they interact with people they know well or when they talk about things that interest them. INTPs are flexible and relaxed in nearly all situations, except when their beliefs or logical conclusions are being criticized. In those cases, the INTP is likely to become very

defensive and argue tirelessly. People with this personality type are truly fearsome debaters, able to devastate their opponents in any field they feel comfortable in – INTPs' ability to make connections between seemingly unrelated facts and notice even the tiniest inconsistencies on the go leaves all other personality types far behind. Even ENTPs, usually considered top debaters due to their expressiveness, are unlikely to beat INTPs when it comes to purely factual arguments.

Sharing many personality traits with other Thinking types, INTPs do not really understand or value decisions based on feelings or subjective opinions. In their opinion, the only good solution is the logical solution – INTPs do not see the point in using emotional arguments. Such an approach preserves the “sanctity” of their intellectual method; however, this also makes it difficult for



INTP personalities to understand other people's feelings or satisfy their emotional needs. People with this personality type cannot stand contradictions or arguments based on something that cannot be measured – this trait rears its head very quickly whenever the INTP is speaking (or even worse, arguing) with someone who is Feeling rather than Thinking. This is one of the main reasons why INTPs usually find it difficult to relate to other people – Feeling types tend to be put off by the INTPs' reliance on logic and facts, and other Thinking individuals, who are already in the minority, dislike engaging in debates when they are not 100% sure they have all the facts. Throw in the fact that approximately 75% of the population are Observant individuals, who place far more importance on practical matters than the ideas or principles that interest INTPs, it is no surprise that people with this personality type may feel lonely sometimes.

Individuals with the INTP personality type are likely to be very open-minded and socially tolerant. These traits, combined with their capacity for inventiveness and original thought, make up a very powerful mix – it is not surprising that INTPs are responsible for many scientific discoveries. An INTP is unlikely to care much about social expectations and the “usual” goals such as job security – rather, they will do their best to find an environment where their creative genius and potential can be expressed.

One of the few bottlenecks that INTPs impose upon themselves is their restless fear of possible failure. No other personality type worries so much about missing a piece of the mental puzzle or overlooking some crucial fact that might lead to a better solution. Unlike their more confident INTJ or ENTJ cousins, INTPs could spend ages reflecting on their actions. Even when an INTP is arguing with someone, this should be taken with a grain of salt – they may as well be arguing with their own mind.

Every personality type has many weak spots and INTPs are not an exception. There is one area where their brilliant mind often becomes completely useless and may even hinder their efforts – INTPs find it very difficult to handle romantic relationships, especially in their earliest stages. People with this personality type are more than capable of loving and taking care of the people close to them, but they are likely to be completely clueless when it comes to attracting a partner. The main reason behind this is that INTP personalities are both private and very rational – they find it difficult to understand the complex and often illogical social rituals that are considered part of the dating “game”, especially in Western societies. Things like flirting or small talk are unnatural to them; furthermore INTPs, especially women, tend to see typical attraction tactics (such as feigning disinterest) as incredibly stupid and irrational. Ironically, INTPs are most likely to attract a partner when they stop looking for them – this is when their self-confidence starts shining again. The depth and uniqueness of the INTPs’ thinking can be very attractive, if they are combined with self-confidence and at least some degree of social awareness.

Some famous INTPs:

- Socrates, philosopher
- Rene Descartes, philosopher
- Blaise Pascal, mathematician and philosopher
- Isaac Newton, physicist
- Carl Jung, psychologist
- Albert Einstein, physicist
- James Madison, former U.S. president
- Dwight D. Eisenhower, former U.S. president
- Gerald Ford, former U.S. president

- Tiger Woods, professional golfer

## *Strengths and Weaknesses*

INTPs tend to be truly insightful and knowledgeable people, seeking to understand how things work and uncover the hidden truths about the world and its inhabitants. They are able to easily analyze complex issues and recognize patterns – these traits allow them to excel in areas that require quick logical thinking. Not surprisingly, INTPs can also use such abilities to stimulate personal development and growth.



People with this personality type are incredibly logical – they put rationality, insight and clarity above everything else. This trait can be both their greatest advantage and their most difficult obstacle, depending on the situation. INTPs usually surpass all other personality types when it comes to processing the available data quickly and objectively, and then making a logical choice. On the other hand, INTPs' never-ending thinking process is inherently chaotic and indecisive, forcing them to jump from one idea to another, worrying about possible failure. Furthermore, most INTPs find it very difficult to explain their complicated ideas and thoughts to others, which can cause a lot of frustration. As life itself is not always logical, INTPs need to learn how to combine their intellectual prowess with other skills necessary to succeed.

## *Strengths*

- **Great analysts and abstract thinkers.** INTP personalities are great at noticing patterns and seeing the big picture. They also possess an impressive ability to jump from one idea to another, linking them in ways that usually bewilder most other personality types.
- **Honest and straightforward.** INTPs do not play social games and see no point in sugar-coating their words. They will clearly state their opinion and expect others to return the favor.

- **Objective.** People with the INTP personality are very logical and rational individuals, who see no point in involving emotions in the decision-making process. Consequently, they tend to pride themselves on being fair and impartial.
- **Imaginative and original.** An INTP's mind is always working, always producing ideas regardless of whether they are likely to see the light of day. Not surprisingly, INTPs have no difficulties coming up with innovative, original solutions.
- **Open-minded.** INTPs tend to be open-minded and willing to accept ideas different from their own, provided that they are supported by facts and logic. Furthermore, INTPs are usually fairly liberal when it comes to social norms and traditions, judging people solely on the basis of their ideas.
- **Enthusiastic.** INTP personalities can spend an enormous amount of time trying to figure out something they are interested in. They will also be very enthusiastic when it comes to discussing that topic with other people.
- **Quick and versatile mind.** INTPs are very good at improving their knowledge of (often diverse) topics and fields that interest them. People with this personality type take pleasure in tackling intellectual challenges and their natural curiosity pushes them forward as well.

## Weaknesses

- **Absent-minded.** INTPs are able to focus all their efforts on analyzing a specific idea, but this usually comes at the cost of ignoring everything else. They may be forgetful or simply miss things that have nothing to do with the object of their interest.
- **Second-guess themselves.** INTP personalities may be excellent analysts, but they often lack the decisiveness of J types. An INTP may find it quite difficult to decide which idea is the best one, always looking for more information and doubting their own conclusions.
- **Insensitive.** INTPs are likely to find it difficult to include emotions in their decision-making process, focusing all their efforts on getting the rational basis right. Consequently, they may often come across as insensitive or be puzzled when it comes to dealing with an emotionally-charged situation. While the INTP's statements may be rational and completely correct, they may not take into account another person's emotional state, background, or individual circumstances.



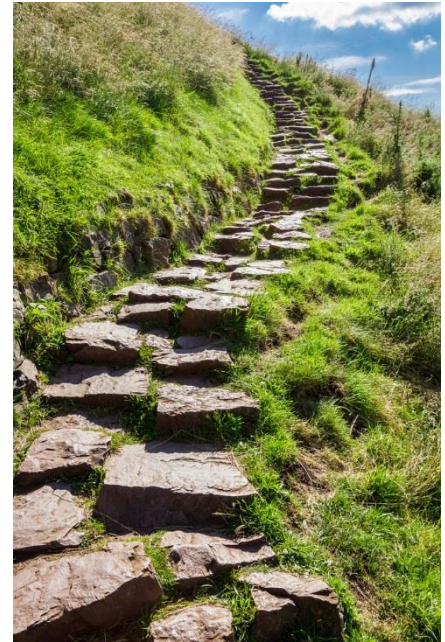
- **Very private and withdrawn.** INTPs are often reluctant to let anyone inside their minds, let alone their hearts. They may often come across as shy in social settings and even the INTP's friends are likely to have a difficult time getting to know them well.
- **May be condescending.** INTP personalities are usually proud of their extensive knowledge and reasoning abilities, but they may get easily frustrated trying to describe their thoughts to other people. INTPs enjoy presenting their ideas to other people, but explaining how they got from A to Z is another matter.
- **Loathe rules and guidelines.** INTPs need a lot of freedom and have little respect for rules and traditions which put artificial limits on their imagination. People with this personality type would rather have less security and more autonomy.
- **Loathe highly structured environments.** INTP personalities do not respect rules or regulations just because they are there; they need to be confident that those restrictions make sense. Consequently, INTPs strongly dislike environments that are built on blind obedience, traditions or respect for authority – they are likely to challenge the status quo and clash with people who prefer stability and safety.

## *Personal Growth*

Knowing your strengths and weaknesses is great, but leveraging or addressing them is even better. Let us take a look at some of the ways to do that.

### What Things Cause the Most Problems for INTPs?

To begin with, INTPs may often become so immersed in their inner dialogues and thoughts that everything else becomes far less important. An INTP may forget or simply refuse to care about appropriate behavior, dressing style or other social norms. Such an approach can quickly isolate them from the rest of society, making the INTP's already strained social links even weaker. INTPs tend to be exceptionally intelligent, but there is a reason why they are often called "eccentric professors" – people with this personality type find ideas and intellectual debates far more interesting than daily matters. This is the key weakness for many INTPs, and one of the most important areas for their personal growth – an INTP should always



try to keep their wandering intuition in check by using the same logic that helps them achieve those amazing intellectual feats. You can only grow your muscles if you challenge them enough; you can only grow as a person if you force yourself to get into something that you are not used to or experienced in. INTPs should pay more attention to the outside world, giving some thought to the question "Where do I fit in this world?" rather than always contemplating how the surroundings and other people fit into a certain theory.

It is also important for an INTP to remain open-minded and flexible. As people with this personality type value truth very highly, they may be unwilling to explore and experiment further if their mind is convinced that it already knows the answer to a specific question. This usually leads to the INTP sticking to topics and ideas that they are familiar with and consequently missing many opportunities to grow and experience things beyond their comfort zone. This applies to scientific theories as well – even though INTPs tend to love new ideas, they may be too afraid to actively seek them out. People with this

personality type may justify such behavior by telling themselves that it is not worth risking the stability of that immense collection of “verified” ideas stored in their mind. However, personal development inevitably involves some discomfort and fear of change – and the only way for an INTP to grow in this area is to open their mind to new things from time to time.

Next, INTPs can be very judgmental when it comes to people who think differently or live a different lifestyle. This trait and the accompanying sense of certain superiority are shared by all Analysts, but keeping these tendencies in control is especially crucial for INTPs. INTJs tend to have very specific goals in mind and use their intellectual resources to achieve those goals; ENTJs and ENTPs are extroverts and are naturally forced to be more open-minded. INTPs, on the other hand, love the process of using logic – the goal of that process is less important. This closes the logical loop and consequently exacerbates the problem. By not allowing different perspectives and ideas to come in, INTPs put themselves in danger of becoming more and more withdrawn and isolated. What is even worse, this can eventually starve the INTP’s mind of new and exciting ideas, making the INTP even more judgmental and caustic to others. INTPs need to understand that their mind needs room to grow and develop – and exposing it to unusual ideas and lifestyle habits can be a very refreshing experience.

It is also important for INTPs to improve their handling of emotions, as well as their recognition of other people’s feelings. People with this personality type are likely to feel very vulnerable when it comes to emotional bonding, even in a romantic relationship. Their mind is so used to solving logical and rational puzzles that it may get completely lost in situations where the INTPs’ logic is just an unnecessary distraction. This is likely to make the experience quite stressful for them. It is important to be aware of what type of communication is likely to be expected by a partner at a specific stage – and the INTP should overcome their fear of the unknown, try to experiment, and then learn from experience. A similar approach should be applied to other situations as well, as INTPs may often unknowingly hurt other people’s feelings, especially earlier on in life. INTPs should start by observing how other personality types interact both in public and in more intimate situations, and not be afraid to show their own emotions from time to time. That being said, it is important to note that INTPs should do their best to control their stress levels while among other people – extreme stress is likely to force the INTP to release very intense emotions, shocking everyone around them.

INTPs are nearly immune to conflict and criticism, but only when they see such comments as rational. They will be more than happy to listen to alternative views and change their opinion if the opponent proves them wrong (this is rare, but not impossible). The INTP may even act as a devil's advocate themselves, if something seems like an interesting idea. However, any argument the INTP sees as irrational or coming from a person that they have not evaluated yet will likely be discarded straight away or, if the INTP feels particularly charitable, ripped apart as illogical, statement by statement, fact by fact, and then handed back to the critic in pieces. As the INTP mind is used to filtering out irrelevant information, it applies the same approach to criticism as well – and this is not always the best option.

INTPs should remember that every type has many weak spots and they are not an exception – as already mentioned, INTPs tend to be quite perplexed when it comes to emotional matters and practical things such as fashion, sense of space, and aesthetics. No matter how difficult it may be for an INTP to accept this, there are many types that are much better at these things, even though they may not have the analytical abilities of the INTP. Consequently, the criticism delivered to the INTP may be entirely justified and valid. People with the INTP personality type are likely to feel quite vulnerable when such matters form the basis of a conflict with someone close to them – they should consciously try to learn from this experience and explore such territory instead of raising their rationality shields and trying to stay in that comfort zone every time this happens.

It is also very important for an INTP to accept the idea that their intellectual capacity can and will be enhanced as a result of consciously seeking opportunities to connect with and listen to other people. The one thing that all INTPs are afraid of is that something can compromise the integrity of their inner sanctum, that nucleus made of critical thinking, logic and knowledge. Of course, there needs to be an emotional distance between the INTP and the environment – however, that sanctum is not at risk just because they spend some time listening to someone that lived in a different age, pursues a different dream or is not as experienced in a field of their interest. Confidence must not become a limiting factor and overshadow curiosity – in the words of Socrates (who is also believed to have been an INTP), “I know one thing; that I know nothing”.

As highly rational creatures, INTPs are likely to face many difficulties when it comes to emotions and sensitivity. They will find it quite problematic to both express and understand feelings – and this may cause significant problems in their relationships. An INTP is likely to even take a certain pride in being unemotional, seeing feelings as illogical and contrasting them with rational thoughts. However, emotions form a crucial part of everyone's personality, and consequently it is imperative to recognize their importance. It is a myth that INTPs do not have emotions – rather, the trait responsible for their expression and recognition is underdeveloped, giving way to rational thinking. This does not mean that INTPs are, or should aspire to be, cold-hearted robots shunning all emotional contact.

Another area that we should cover here is INTPs' social skills. This is one thing that always comes up in our surveys – many INTPs state outright that they have issues in this area. Let us first discuss why this happens.

All Analysts share the combination of Intuitive and Thinking traits, feeling most comfortable in the world of ideas and principles as opposed to facts and strictly down-to-earth, practical matters. This is why they dislike small talk – it forces Analysts to discuss topics that they are mostly unfamiliar with. Gossip, sports and various details of daily life (“Guess what I saw at the bus stop this morning...”) rarely interest people belonging to this type group – consequently, finding something to talk about can be a real challenge. While silence works well as a negotiation tactic, it makes most people really uncomfortable in casual conversations. Analysts in general tend to have difficulty with this, but INTPs and their cousins, INTJs, are the ones most likely to suffer from a lack of social skills – they are reserved, quiet types, used to being alone and engaging in self-reflection as opposed to relying on external connections. The combination of all these traits makes it very difficult for most INTPs to engage in small talk and leads to awkwardness in social situations, especially if the other person is not willing to take the lead. In turn, the INTP may often experience anxiety well in advance of a social event, knowing that it is likely to be a challenge.

There are two things to be considered here. One is that the ability to make small talk can be developed just like any other skill. INTPs are good at dealing with intellectual challenges and there is no reason why small talk should not be approached just like any other. There is plenty of advice available on the internet (for instance, [Lifhack](#) suggests focusing on F.O.R.M. – Family, Occupation, Recreation and

Money), so we will not go into specifics here – however, it is worth pointing out that everything boils down to the fact that the main purpose of small talk is to serve as a gateway leading to a deeper, more meaningful conversation. It also has other uses, such as getting a quick glimpse into another person's personality and making them feel more important, so there are plenty of reasons why time should be taken to develop this skill.

Another thing is that the ability to make small talk does not represent the entire spectrum of social skills. INTPs can be very eloquent and convincing when they are talking about something that greatly interests them – they are perfectly capable of painting an impressive picture with their words. Likewise, they are unlikely to have any difficulties keeping up their side of the conversation if they are talking with another like-minded Analyst. There is no reason to think that there is something wrong with you if you simply have poor small talk skills. In all likelihood, you have spent just a tiny amount of time practicing them, when compared to nearly any Extrovert – of course you will be at a disadvantage. However, if you break this issue down into its basic building blocks and strategies, you will find that it is far less scary than it looks. Most people love talking about themselves, all they need is a little encouragement. For instance, simply try to listen to what they are saying and then ask some basic follow-up questions. For example, “I was thinking about joining the Army, but went into hotel management instead” leads to at least two questions – one about the Army, another one about hotels. Do not focus on what you are going to say next or think that you are obliged to immediately offer some information about yourself in return. There are plenty of things that make small talk much easier – just do the necessary research. This (and practice, of course) will make your life much easier in social situations.

Further, it is worth remembering that small talk is just the exterior layer, a tool that is used to ease into more serious topics. Knowing all the tips and strategies in the world will not help if you start feeling fidgety and anxious the moment someone asks you a question. If you are feeling really uncomfortable in social situations, your true self-confidence always shows, and this is what you need to work on. It is often said that actual talking is just one part of the conversation, and a small one at that – your body language is far more critical. A quick example to illustrate the value of self-confidence: imagine two well-dressed gentlemen in a high-end restaurant, both having chicken for dinner. One is anxiously trying to cut some meat off the bone using a fork and a knife, doing his best to maintain composure. The other one is



completely relaxed and is simply holding the chicken drumstick with one of his hands. The latter will look infinitely better – you may wonder for a moment why he is eating this way in a really nice restaurant, but his calmness and self-confidence will be far more important than his use of utensils. The same applies to social situations – you need to know the basic techniques, but they will not really mean anything if your body language is screaming “I am uncomfortable”. It is very important to work on the projection of self-confidence, especially if you are actively trying to meet new people, e.g. a potential partner. We have already covered this in the previous section – focus on things that make you tick and you should have no problems.

## How to Make Good Use of INTP Traits

Now that we have discussed the INTP weaknesses, let us move on to their strengths. The most impressive trait of any INTP is their ability to become completely immersed in the analysis of a certain idea and to focus all their mental resources on a specific problem. Such abilities become even more expressed as the INTP grows and develops. People with this personality type should also try to apply this approach outside the world of systems and science – INTPs are already naturally strong here, so there may be other areas where that attention is more needed, such as a romantic relationships and lifestyle habits. INTPs often find it quite easy to become respected experts in their chosen field, but applying the same rules to other areas in life may prove to be far more difficult.

INTPs can also be quite relaxed and have an easy approach to life, spiced up by a good sense of humor. This is a great thing, especially considering the fact that the INTP’s traits inevitably push them towards never-ending intellectual pursuits. An INTP should always remember to relax and enjoy the simple pleasures in life, soaking in the experience – this is especially important in areas where they may not feel so comfortable, such as romantic relationships or deep emotional conversations. There is a reason why INTPs are often seen as dreamy philosophers – their relaxation and sense of humor can make it easier for their partners or other people to drag the INTP out of their shell, if they know where to start.

One of the most important things that INTPs can do to encourage the growth and development of their personality is to give more room to their Intuitive trait. It is usually overshadowed by their Thinking trait, and this may lead to several problems. The INTP’s mind is only interested in facts that support the

logical thought process – consequently, the rest are discarded as irrelevant. This may be a good approach in scientific research or analysis, but such a “filter” may cause significant problems for the INTP in situations where logical rules do not always apply. For instance, the Thinking trait would resist the notion that things such as emotions or love can be important as well. In contrast, the INTP’s Intuitive trait can recognize all the possibilities and allow the individual to learn the value of, for example, social interaction – these areas tend to be severely neglected by many INTPs and consequently this is a key area for personal development. It is impossible to understand and connect with other people if the information about their behavior is discarded as irrelevant or not fitting the INTP’s vision of the world.

It is worth briefly discussing INTPs’ love lives as well. INTPs tend to have intense and pure feelings for people who are close to them, especially their romantic partners, and they are also very undemanding. It is very easy to live with an INTP – they may have relatively poor practical skills or difficulties expressing their emotions, but you can rest assured that their daily needs will be quite simple. However, this also means that INTPs may have problems understanding their partner’s needs and expectations. They may be very surprised by the fact that another person expects more from the relationship – and the INTP’s natural response will be to back away. The INTP may even start telling themselves that the relationship is not actually that important (or worse, not worth the bother). People with this personality type should remember that for them, love often starts with the head, not the heart – furthermore, they must take time to figure out what emotions the other person actually invokes in them. Any INTP who wants to grow and develop needs to be aware of these weaknesses and be willing to handle them accordingly.

INTPs can be very determined and passionate if they truly care about something. However, they should make a conscious effort to keep their mind focused on one project instead of jumping from one topic to another. The INTP mind is not meant for routine things or following steps A, B, C, D... - it will jump from A to D, then back to C, then think of a better way to handle B and so on. It is important for an INTP to keep this tendency in check in order to guarantee a project’s success. As Thomas Edison once said, “Genius is one percent inspiration, ninety nine percent perspiration.” No matter how intelligent an INTP is, their mind needs to stay on track, especially if that phase of the process is relatively dull.



It is also likely that an INTP will be able to understand and utilize principles or ideas that would normally be considered to be beyond their intellectual capacity or knowledge. This may come as a pleasant surprise to an INTP and provide an opportunity for significant personal growth – however, the only way to do this is to recognize that there is much to learn and then go into the uncharted territory. Even though INTPs tend to be confident in their knowledge, this naturally makes them reluctant to do things that might endanger that feeling – such as trying to learn something that is completely new to them. A growth-oriented INTP should recognize this and overcome the powerlessness and frustration that often form part of the learning process. This will allow the INTP to go above and beyond what other personality types can achieve.

It is also fair to say that as an INTP, you will likely have better critical thinking skills than most people you meet. The ability to self-reflect and to analyze your own motives, decisions and mistakes is a great strength, and you should utilize it often. This is especially important when it comes to personal development – making goals for yourself and managing your ego is an excellent recipe for personal growth. However, it is just as important to not overthink things, especially where there is plenty of subjectivity involved. For instance, people's actions cannot always be explained with rational arguments, and this affects numerous other things in life. INTPs often find it hard to accept this idea, but it is unavoidable in many situations. You will not be able to find objective answers to everything.

Finally, it is worth stressing that you need to be happy with yourself, rather than try to meet other people's expectations or work hard on developing traits that society says are valuable, but that go against who you are. As you are probably well aware, INTPs (especially INTP women) are really rare, so it is completely understandable that many of the things that the wider society seems to value – such as materialistic rewards, socializing, and following the well-travelled path of study-work-buy-a-house – may seem forced and unnatural to you. Society, especially in the Western world, is dominated by Observant types (especially Sentinels) who usually get to set the rules determining which traits are considered strengths and which ones are seen as weaknesses. However, this does not mean that you need to change who you are in order to be successful – recognize your weak points, but do not try to mold your personality to suit someone else's expectations.

## Managing Emotions

We would also like to spend some time covering the area that most INTPs are likely to find very problematic – handling feelings and emotions.

Most INTP personalities pride themselves in remaining rational and logical at all times, seeing most emotional displays as a sign of weakness and irrationality. As people with this personality type also tend to be very honest and straightforward, it is no surprise that they are often seen as insensitive. Some INTPs may go even further, claiming that they have no feelings or emotions at all, and that anyone who does is weak and irrational.

Ironically, INTPs can be just as emotional, if not more so, than any other personality type. Everything depends on how we define and handle emotions – for instance, there is a world of difference between breaking down in public and simply being thoughtful or amused. For most INTPs, public displays of emotion are outside of their comfort zone and consequently they will do their best to restrain themselves. However, this does not mean that INTPs have no feelings – rather, they tend to be good at channeling their emotions and using logic to keep them in check.

One of the reasons behind the cold exterior is that people with the INTP personality type tend to be very proud of their knowledge and abilities – revealing emotions or even acknowledging that they exist may be a frightening prospect, especially if the INTP in question is younger and secretly not as confident as they would like to be. In such cases, the INTP will shield themselves with coldness and logic, allowing their Thinking trait to act like a protective big brother to their emotions.

Second, logic and rationality play a dominant role in the INTP decision-making process – feelings usually only come into play when their Thinking trait cannot come up with a rational solution to a difficult problem. To give an example, if an INTP is upset, they will not need to tell everyone around them that they are upset – on the contrary, they will focus on identifying why they are upset and then coming up with a logical solution to their problems. Alternatively, they will channel that energy into something productive.

That being said, emotions will always influence the decisions that the INTP is making, at least to some extent – it is impossible to separate the two, even though most people with the INTP personality type try hard to make decisions and solve problems without involving their feelings. How we process is also how we feel, and how we feel is also how we process – this applies to INTPs as well. However, people with this personality type find it quite easy to deal with those emotions internally, without exposing them to the outside world, and this is why they may radiate that aura of logic and detachment.

The point is, INTP personalities can be very sensitive and have very deep feelings. Even though these emotions will be shielded from the public view by their Thinking trait and will (usually) not be the deciding factor in the INTP decision-making process, this does not mean that INTPs should be seen as, or should aspire to be, cold-blooded and insensitive geniuses living by the mantra that emotions are for the weak. This is not the case and is not going to happen.

## Your Dark Side

Each personality type has its dark side – it may emerge under extreme stress or fatigue, especially if the individual is frustrated by their real or perceived weaknesses. In those cases, their “evil twin” may manifest itself as the complete opposite of their personality, throwing the underdeveloped shadow traits into the light. Outwardly, it would seem as if the individual has suddenly decided to adopt a completely different approach to many things, including their career, romantic relationships, habits and so on. Inside, the individual is likely to feel confused and split between two completely different worldviews.

In some circumstances, such a change may not be sudden or short-lived – the individual may choose, either consciously or unconsciously, to behave in this way for a very long time if, for instance, they seek to fight their overly protective parents, restrictive environment, or bad memories. These behaviors can show themselves in a variety of ways, and in many circumstances. An exemplary student leaving her parents’ house may become a party animal in college. A sociable, friendly and sensitive guy may purposefully isolate himself from the outside world and become obsessed by radical ideas after a senseless crime committed against a close friend. Maybe a quiet, conservative girl suffering from a bad break-up suddenly becomes far more liberal, or embraces a completely different philosophy when it comes to choosing partners.

It is not impossible that the individual's social circle will encourage them as well, by complimenting the clearly visible changes, e.g. more spontaneity, sensitivity or willingness to take risks – this will also reassure the individual, maybe even leading them towards a conclusion that this is actually their “real” personality and their previous persona was just a repressed version of their “real” self.

INTPs are not an exception to this rule. Your “evil twin” would be an unhealthy version of the ESFJ personality – it may push you towards things like emotional outbursts, caring deeply about your social status, engaging in pointless repetitive activities, befriending random strangers, drinking and gambling. This may even feel liberating at times – for instance, you may feel strangely energized by social interaction or risky decisions that pay off – but that state is likely to be short-lived, succeeded by feelings of emptiness and confusion.

In such circumstances, it is important to remember to stop and think hard about who you truly are and whether your behavior is a true reflection of your inner self, or only a temporary mirage created by your mind to serve some kind of purpose (e.g. to try something completely different). Do not think about what you *are* (an engineer, a nice guy or a brilliant student) – that is irrelevant. Rather, think about what you can *do*. Pick up a blank sheet of paper and a pen, sit down and try to think of your purpose in life, of something that you would really, really want to create, experience or achieve in 5, 10 or 20 years. Any random thought will do, just keep writing them all down. You will definitely know when you have hit the right one – it may even make you cry. That will be the definition and reflection of your true self.

Simply being familiar with the fact that each one of us has a dark side is a good thing – this will enable you to spot when that “switch” has happened, either within yourself or within someone close to you. Otherwise, you may be oblivious to what is going on and even think that it would be a good idea to shut down any doubts and simply “double up” on whatever you are doing, getting drawn deeper into the never-ending spiral of cheating yourself. It is one thing to use and develop your weaker traits wisely – it is quite another to give in and let them lead the way completely unchallenged.

## Emotional Stability

Another important area related to INTPs' personal growth is emotional stability. This is determined by the last trait that we discussed in the "INTP Type Traits" section above, the "Identity" subsection – you will have also seen your personal score after completing our personality test. There are two sides of the "Identity" scale:

- Assertive – people with the Assertive identity are emotionally stable, calm, relaxed and refuse to worry too much.
- Turbulent – people with the Turbulent identity are self-conscious, perfectionists, care about their image and tend to be success-driven.

Most individuals are close to the middle on this particular scale, although that depends on the social environment and sex of the individual. This varies from region to region – sex differences are negligible in Africa and Asia, but rather significant in the Western world where, for instance, women tend to be further to the right side of the scale (i.e. more likely to have a Turbulent identity).

If you are an Assertive INTP, you are likely to be quite comfortable with your identity – you know what your strengths and weaknesses are, and do not hesitate to leverage them where possible. You may be relatively perfectionistic, but you do not go overboard with it, knowing that no one is perfect and no project is worth obsessing too much about. Similarly, you do not feel threatened by minor challenges, remaining calm and focused in stressful situations. All INTPs tend to be good at controlling their emotions, but Assertive INTPs go further, refusing to internalize them – this means that even deep down, they are not really affected by either negative or positive emotions. They rarely get stressed or excited, staying calm and composed at all times.

On the other hand, the Assertive identity is not always a positive thing. A certain level of self-consciousness or occasional "emotional rollercoasters" can be quite useful, especially from a personal development perspective – for instance, Assertive INTPs are likely to have a lower drive, and potentially productivity, due to lower sensitivity to negative outcomes. People with this variant of the INTP personality also tend to be more forceful and self-confident, which can isolate them from other people –

it is important to remember that INTPs have a rather unique set of traits and skills, and these differences set them apart, even without taking the Assertive identity into account.

In contrast, if you have a Turbulent identity, you are likely to be rather anxious about your performance and prone to worrying too much about the consequences of your actions. As an INTP, you would still be rather confident in your abilities, knowing that you are a resourceful and knowledgeable individual – however, it is also likely that you will push yourself to the limit, internalizing all the stress and worry that will inevitably accompany your perfectionism. Deep down, you may also care about how other people perceive you (or how your ideal self would perceive you), even though you may do your best not reveal that sensitive side of yours. This can lead to certain “emotional rollercoasters”, with you feeling at the top of the world when you see your plans coming nicely to fruition, and then plunging into the abyss when you are forced to face your weaknesses or when you feel lost or can no longer cope with the workload. The Turbulent identity is inseparable from higher stress levels, which can also lead to health problems if left unaddressed.

Then again, there are certain advantages to having a Turbulent identity. For instance, it could be argued that because Turbulent INTPs are more success-driven and self-conscious than their Assertive cousins, they can also potentially achieve better results and become more well-rounded individuals instead of feeling satisfied with where and who they are.

Regardless of whether you are an Assertive or a Turbulent INTP, everything depends on your willingness and ability to address the challenges posed by your identity type. Each side has its own advantages and disadvantages, although generally you should try to stay close to the middle of this scale in order to achieve optimal results and grow as an individual. If you have an Assertive identity, learn to recognize the benefits of setting more difficult goals for yourself and occasionally giving in to your emotions – they are an inseparable part of our lives and Assertive INTPs should not try to present themselves as highly intelligent yet completely unemotional. Similarly, if you have a Turbulent identity, learn how to not internalize stress or negative emotions, and do not see yourself as a superhuman who must always aim for the best and never fail.

## Motivation and Self-Esteem

Closely related (but distinct), your self-esteem, self-respect and self-confidence are the sources of your motivation. Self-esteem speaks to your sense of your own worth. Self-respect speaks to how much you like yourself. Self-confidence is where you find the energy that moves you forward in your life. Much of our core motivation comes from trying to successfully satisfy these core aspects of ourselves. Think of them as three powerful psychological engines that, when understood and harnessed, can lead to a successful and fulfilling life.

However, like anything in life, if you allow these engines to overheat they can overwhelm you, becoming a source of great difficulty. This usually happens because something in our psychological make-up needs support, so we overcompensate to gird that which feels weak to us. If for some reason we're not feeling self-confident, we might pour on the thing that gives us confidence. The problem is that sometimes we crank this compensation up too high.

We begin each of these sections by discussing the tendencies in their healthy form. When people use these motivators in a balanced way, they can help them be productive and happy. This represents the ideal expression of the motivator.

We follow with the tendencies to watch out for if the engine begins to overheat. The purpose is not to describe anyone specifically. The descriptions in the second part may sound extreme, and they probably are for most INTPs and other Analysts. People generally exist with different degrees of expression, somewhere between fully this and fully that. Life has a way of socializing us and balancing us regardless of our foundational traits. When reading the second part, think in terms of tendencies and regard it more as a cautionary tale.

Self-improvement is about stepping outside our comfort zones to expand our lives for the better. Lastly, we suggest a simple way to get along more effectively in the world through some simple rebalancing exercises.

## *Self-Esteem*

**Ideal Self-Esteem:** INTPs base their sense of self-worth on their resourcefulness. Being able to use their agile minds to figure out what is what and to find effective solutions makes them feel like they are at their best. INTPs are often knowledgeable and can perform like a walking search engine with all the pertinent facts at their fingertips. Combining their preference for intuition and thinking, they can deftly put facts together in a logical and useful way.

Since this is such an integral part of their identity, it's natural that they measure their worth by how they see and utilize their resourcefulness, and preserving it is the basic motivator in their lives. INTPs like to come across as experts who know how to apply facts and logic and as the people to go to if anyone needs to make sense of anything. They can be most helpful in untangling complex problems and helping to discover solutions.

**Unbalanced Self-Esteem:** INTPs are not the most social people from any perspective, often being considered awkward, condescending, and abrasive. They often believe what goes on in their heads is more important than the people around them.

If they need to strengthen their sense of self-worth, their resourcefulness can overheat and transform into arrogance. INTPs may begin to believe their own press, placing their own ideas and solutions above the opinions of others. It's not a matter of the press not being true, it's just that sometimes ingredients other than logic can contribute to the right decision.

INTPs run the risk of discounting the contributions of others, damaging both social and career satisfaction and advancement. Condescension is not pretty, and nobody likes a know-it-all.

**Rebalanced Self-Esteem:** To rebalance, INTPs may do well to use their analytical tools in a way that mimics empathy. Empathy doesn't come naturally to them and clearly isn't a strong point. Think Sheldon Cooper on "The Big Bang Theory" as an extreme example. Instead of trying to identify with others' feelings, INTPs might learn what that looks like and note how others respond to the world.

For INTPs, learning to deal with the other character types might be an intellectual exercise akin to visiting a foreign culture. While one may not necessarily "go native" when visiting a different culture, one does



try to respect their way of life. Become an observer and learn the language and the customs to get along in the new setting. An anthropologist might relish the opportunity to learn about the culture.

INTPs can do something similar. Playing the mental game of “anthropologist”, they can try to understand enough to take on repairing any alienation they might have created. It’s just a matter of deliberately channeling their analytical skills in a socially healthy direction. Learning the 16 personalities and their variants can be useful for this.

### *Self-Respect*

**Ideal Self-Respect:** INTPs respect themselves when they have a sense of independence. They like to keep their own counsel as they navigate the world, using their ideas and heavy-duty thinking as much as possible. That’s when they feel that they are at their best. INTPs interpret doing otherwise as being dependent, and depending on someone else’s ideas or conclusions is not nearly as satisfying. This motivator can lead down the “road less traveled” and that, in turn, can lead to fresh perspectives that can be useful and even revolutionary at times. INTPs’ agile minds can see what others miss, and when this occurs, it can be a powerful point of pride and self-respect for this personality type.

**Unbalanced Self-Respect:** “Overheated” INTPs may go so rogue that they come to disdain even necessary structures that support their academic or career goals. They can take their loathing for conformity to an extreme and this can make them useless to an organization and simply unpleasant in most other ways. This is especially true if the system they’re bucking doesn’t mesh with their rational framework. If it doesn’t make sense to them, it’s a safe bet that they aren’t going to easily fall in line. To INTPs that is the worst kind of dependence. However, no person is an island, even if that person is an INTP. An extreme belief in going it alone can seriously hamper success.

**Rebalanced Self-Respect:** The solution for INTPs will always be to return to their intellect and their world of ideas. For them, rebalancing extreme independence might mean learning to accept the idea that there is such a thing as “healthy opportunism”. Logically, they don’t have to accept or agree with the principles of an organization or a social structure to benefit from it.

The questions INTPs might seriously ask when at odds with an idea or philosophy, “What can I get from this? How can this help me advance?” might sound manipulative, but that’s because they are – this isn’t always a bad thing. Aren’t we all just trying to have our needs met? Why shouldn’t INTPs put their skills to good use? Certainly, with their resourcefulness, they can figure out a way to make any system work for them if they need to. That’s independent thinking. And who knows? By “playing the game”, they may genuinely soften and expand their comfort zone to the point where they begin to understand the viewpoints of others.

### *Self-Confidence*

**Ideal Self-Confidence:** INTPs move forward relying on their willpower. They have to believe that their will is strong enough to enable them to tackle any challenge that comes their way. Mostly trusting their own thoughts and ideas, INTPs need to feel the locus of control is coming from inside them to confidently move forward – if that is where the trust lies, who else is there? – and a strong-willed person with the right values and insight can change the world.

**Unbalanced Self-Confidence:** When they invest too much in their own willpower, INTPs may lose confidence in areas of their lives where that control means little. Sexual feelings are not always rational. Emotions will not always comply with how we want to feel at a particular time. Even if we adopt the healthiest lifestyle habits, sometimes we get sick anyway. Other people will refuse to take direction no matter how much we think they should. People we care about die and there’s nothing we can do about it. When it becomes clear that their willpower is useless in a certain situation, INTPs may feel lost. It might even cause a fear reaction and result in inappropriate behavior in their attempt to regain confidence. They may try to push through even though reality says they can’t.

**Rebalanced Self-Confidence:** Many 12 Step programs include an exercise where members are encouraged to think about accepting what they can’t change, changing what they can, and recognizing the difference between the two. This is a great exercise for INTPs. Taking an inventory of these things and coming to grips with the undeniable truth that not everything can be bent to their will may help INTPs preserve their peace of mind. While this is not deeply satisfying to them, acceptance can help them adopt a perspective that, nonetheless, allows them to enjoy a certain level of serenity and confidence.



## *Romantic Relationships*



Even though romantic relationships and dating are inherently difficult for INTPs, people with this personality type take them very seriously. The main problem that INTPs are likely to face in this area is that they are not naturally sensitive or emotional individuals – consequently, understanding another person’s feelings or expressing their own is not something that an INTP is well equipped to do. INTPs spend a large part of their lives in their heads,

and consequently what they see and understand intuitively can be much more advanced than a “bland” reality. As a result, someone with the INTP personality may find it challenging to merge those fantasies and high requirements with reality. Unfortunately, their superior logic and imagination may actually hinder the INTP when they start looking for a partner.

This is one of the main reasons why INTPs are often branded as picky and snobbish by people who are used to getting attention primarily because of their looks or social status, or cannot understand how the INTP could remain rational while looking for a partner. INTPs tend to see dating as a way to find someone they could invest their time and effort in, someone that would understand and appreciate their ideas – most other types would find this very odd and unromantic. Furthermore, INTP personalities sometimes come up with lists of intellectual and physical traits they would like their partners to have or obtain, ticking boxes as the relationship progresses. Other Analysts do this more often (especially ENTJs and INTJs), but such an approach is quite popular among INTPs as well. The problem is that those requirements may be quite unrealistic, given that INTPs often lack experience in this area – people with this personality type need to find the middle ground between having overly strict criteria and settling down with the first person who is interested in having a relationship with them.

Furthermore, INTPs strongly dislike being at the center of emotionally-charged situations. As interpersonal conflicts are virtually inevitable in even the happiest romantic relationships, INTPs may

find those situations quite frustrating and consequently try to avoid or ignore emotional conflicts in their relationship, especially during the dating phase. If there is no escape, the INTP will try to find a solution, but will likely rely on the analytical approach, which can be very different from what their partner (especially if they belong to one of the Feeling types) might expect. INTP personalities should try to include this in their thought process, especially when it comes to dealing with conflicts in the earlier stages of the relationship. The INTP's tendency to always trust their knowledge and understanding can inadvertently hurt other people, as it is not always a good idea to look at conflict situations as logical puzzles, worthy of analysis.

These weaknesses aside, INTP personalities tend to be very loyal and faithful partners. INTPs are also unusually direct and honest, even if they have just started dating someone. People with this personality type always stick to their commitments and are actually quite easy to date and live with – they have simple daily needs and do not demand much from their partners. However, despite seeking simplicity in dating and romantic relationships, INTPs do not lack passion or romantic feelings. On the contrary, people with the INTP personality type tend to be extremely creative individuals whose vivid imagination allows them to always remain very enthusiastic and passionate in romantic relationships. Anyone dating an INTP may be quite surprised by this sometimes. INTPs' feelings run very deep and can be very powerful – but they will be expressed in a way that will be very different from the usual cuddling, kissing and saying "I love you" every couple of minutes. They may do that as well, but only because they have learned that this is expected, not because it is natural to them. Generally, INTPs tend to be wonderful mates – loyal, honest and always eager to work on improving the relationship.

INTPs' simple daily needs are a complete opposite of their inner world, which is bound to be very complex and colorful. However, there is a certain logic behind this – INTPs purposefully seek simplicity in "real" life so they can focus all their mental power on the inner world.

Sexually, INTPs are likely to be very imaginative and enthusiastic, provided that their partner is willing to reciprocate. However, it is important that the INTP does not fall into the habit of spending more time theorizing about intimacy than communicating with their partner. People with this personality type,

especially women, need to feel that their mind is aroused just as much as their body in order to be fully stimulated – for INTPs, a lack of intelligence tends to be a big turn-off, even if it is a one-time thing.

People with the INTP personality type are likely to use their rich imagination to achieve as much as possible in intimate situations. While their enthusiasm can be very impressive, INTPs should be aware of their tendency to prioritize the inner world – it is entirely possible that an INTP will imagine an intimate situation in a very exciting and interesting way, but will choose not to reveal that to their dating or long-term partner.

Another potential issue that someone with the INTP personality type should try to resolve is their tendency to overlook their partner's emotional needs. As already mentioned above, INTPs are not naturally sensitive or emotional, but their partner might have a very different personality – it is important for an INTP to try to understand their feelings and communicate on an emotional level, instead of simply relying on commitment and dedication and believing that this is all that is needed. Of course, their partner should also be aware of INTP personality traits and quirks, and try not to demand a constant flow of emotions from the INTP.

## Potential Pairings

Let us now take a look at all potential trait pairings – this will help you understand how those combinations work in romantic relationships. Each combination of traits brings different things into the relationship, sometimes positive and sometimes negative – knowing what to expect will definitely help you further down the road. However, please remember that each individual is unique, and what



is true for one may not be true for another. Ultimately, you will be responsible for figuring out what exact role these traits play in your relationship. That being said, an INTP's preferred partners are likely to be ENTJ and ENFJ types, as their Extraversion and Judging traits counterbalance INTPs' Introversion and Prospecting traits.

### *An Introverted (I) Partner*

The best thing about being in a relationship with another Introvert is that you are both likely to be entirely self-sufficient. Spending time alone is not going to scare you that much – nor would the idea of staying at home and doing something together instead of going out. You are not going to feel a strong need to be around other people – talking with your partner will suffice.

You will also be in a good position when it comes to resolving problems in a relationship. As Introverts, you will both be used to discussing something and then going through all the details in your mind, as opposed to dealing with it externally, i.e. by relying on the actual discussion process.

As Introverts, you likely have been pushed to "go out and socialize" numerous times in your lives. This is not going to happen in your relationship – in all likelihood, having a couple of close friends will fulfill all your socialization needs.

On the other hand, there are difficulties you are likely to face. As you are both going to be quite reserved, you will likely have a situation where neither partner is willing to step up and push the other to socialize – or take the lead in a social event that you cannot escape from (e.g. the wedding of a relative). Despite being Introverts, you are going to need at least some socialization if you want to avoid feeling isolated. The fact that you both are used to dodging social interaction is going to make this difficult.

You may also have difficulties when it comes to resolving conflicts. As mentioned above, introspection is great when you are analyzing your mistakes – the problem is that you need to become aware of those mistakes to begin with. As you are both likely to keep your thoughts to yourselves instead of throwing them out in the open, you will probably encounter many situations where one partner is keeping feelings of resentment inside, allowing them to build up instead of talking about them. You will have to consciously work on improving your communication and get used to opening up.

Tips for both individuals:

1. **Be patient.** Your potential partner may need a lot of time to open up to you.
2. **When dating, choose locations without much social pressure.** Your potential partner may feel uncomfortable with many other people around.



3. **Do not overcompensate.** Small talk is unavoidable in the dating phase, but you are unlikely to be good at it. Do not overcompensate by trying to appear chatty and sociable or pushing your potential partner to talk. At best, you will look insecure and the other person will feel uncomfortable.
4. **Speak up.** Once you transition into a relationship, you will need to remind yourself to share your thoughts with your partner instead of sticking to your habit of keeping everything to yourself. Communication is key in an Introvert-Introvert relationship.
5. **Do not get stuck in a bubble.** You may both have difficulties when it comes to socializing with other people. Make sure that you do not falsely reassure each other that such interaction is completely unnecessary, even if this seems to be an easy option.

### *An Extraverted (E) Partner*

The best thing about being in a relationship with someone who does not share your first trait is that you are going to balance each other out quite well. The Introvert will encourage the Extravert to slow down and take a moment to think before acting, to spend more time reflecting on things before jumping straight into the action. The Extravert, on the other hand, will draw the Introvert out from their shell, playing the role of the socializer in the relationship, encouraging their partner to establish new social links and taking care of any social obligations that the couple might have.

These differences will also be beneficial when it comes to resolving conflicts in the relationship. However, it is crucial that both partners be mature and willing to listen to each other instead of sticking to their own guns and refusing to accept different viewpoints. If all goes well, both partners will be able to cover each other's strengths and weaknesses.

That being said, each stick has two ends and personality differences may also have a negative impact on the stability and health of the relationship. If one (or both) of the partners is not very mature, they may have difficulty understanding the other person's perspective. In such circumstances, the Extravert may be frustrated by the fact that their Introverted partner is more reserved and private, or has poor social skills. And vice versa, the Introvert may be annoyed by the Extravert's chattiness or need to socialize.



It is crucial that both individuals make a conscious effort to understand each other – in all likelihood, they will both think that their way of life is perfectly normal and it is the other person who is strange. The fact that we tend to surround ourselves with friends who are like us is not going to help either – this simply reinforces our positive perception of ourselves along with the idea that our traits are the right ones. The only way to get out of this bubble is to push the limits and try to see the world through another person's eyes. When an Introvert and an Extravert form a relationship, they give each other an excellent opportunity to do just that.

Tips for you:

1. **Do not overcompensate.** Small talk is unavoidable in the dating phase, but you are unlikely to be good at it. Do not overcompensate by trying to appear chatty and sociable – let the Extravert take the lead. Otherwise, you will simply look insecure.
2. **Speak up.** Once you transition into a relationship, you will need to remind yourself to share your thoughts with your partner instead of sticking to your habit of keeping everything to yourself.
3. **Do not get stuck in a bubble.** You will likely have difficulties when it comes to socializing with other people. Your Extraverted partner will probably take care of this in social situations, but that does not mean that you should not make a conscious effort to bring something to the conversation. Do not get lazy.
4. **Be tolerant.** Your partner is likely to have difficulties when it comes to understanding why you need to spend time alone instead of talking to them. They might also worry that they have done something to offend you – as Extraverts recharge while spending time with other people, your partner may not know that you need exactly the opposite. Take the time to explain how your mind works.

Tips for your partner:

1. **Be patient.** Your potential partner may need a lot of time to open up to you.
2. **When dating, choose locations without much social pressure.** Your potential partner may feel uncomfortable with many other people around.

3. **Do not be overbearing.** Small talk is often a challenge for Introverts, even though it is unavoidable in the dating phase. Do not be overbearing by trying to get your potential partner to talk extensively about themselves. At best, they will feel uncomfortable.
4. **Be tolerant.** Your partner is likely to have difficulties when it comes to socializing with other people or even yourself a lot of the time. Remember that they get exhausted by social interaction, unlike you, who are recharged by it. There will be times when they will want to be alone – be understanding, give them space and do not ask them what is wrong. This has nothing to do with you – your Introvert simply needs some time alone to recharge.

### *An Intuitive (N) Partner*

As Intuitives, you are both likely to prefer introspection over observation – that is, you will spend more time exploring the world of ideas as opposed to keeping your feet on the ground. A relationship between two Intuitives is an amazing thing to observe – both partners are usually able to establish a connection that allows them to understand each other without words. The combination of intuition, introspection and imagination is likely to be a great driving force in your relationship.

Intuitives are relatively rare (only 15-25% of the population), so the fact that you managed to find another Intuitive is impressive in itself. Usually, the connection between such partners is instantaneous, making them feel as if someone finally understands them. This is often a welcome break from all the comments about their tendency to have their heads in the clouds or to miss things that other personality types consider obvious. It is quite unlikely that two Intuitives will run out of things to talk about – this is a great advantage both in the dating phase and later on in the relationship.

Unfortunately, this is just one side of the coin. It is very important to be able to communicate with each other effectively, but it is often the practical matters that cause problems in Intuitive-Intuitive relationships. As both partners are going to favor abstract issues, ideas and future plans, one of them will inevitably have to take the lead and handle the concrete things, such as shopping, cooking, maintenance and money management. Intuitives tend to not be good at these matters and this may cause tension in the relationship.

Another problem that you are likely to face is your tendency to distract each other. Intuitives often get lost in their world of ideas and possibilities, drifting from one concept to another – and while this is a wonderful trait when it comes to creativity and innovation, it can also cause significant problems in the relationship. It is important to take time to enjoy the present and the simple things in life – otherwise both partners may feel overwhelmed and tired all the time. Keep your eyes on the stars, but also remember to keep your feet on the ground.

Tips for both individuals:

1. **Deal with practical tasks.** Neither partner is likely to enjoy (or be good at) handling routine, daily chores – however, it is important to deal with them on time, avoiding the buildup of problems.
2. **Do things that engage your creativity.** You both will find it easier to deal with ideas than practical things, so do not try to mimic the behavior of other people and push your partner (or yourself) to participate in activities that require good use of all five senses. This is especially important in the dating phase.
3. **Be realistic.** As Intuitives, you will both have plenty of ideas that may or may not be realistic. Do not overcommit yourselves.
4. **Enjoy the present.** You are both likely to spend a lot of time thinking about the future. Find a way to enjoy the present as well – time flows quickly.
5. **Share your ideas.** Imagination is one of your greatest assets – use it. Your partner will likely be able to see some things from a different perspective, while at the same time staying on the same wavelength as you.

### *An Observant (S) Partner*

This is one of the most challenging, yet potentially most rewarding combinations. These traits determine how we see the world, how we think, how we communicate – and this is just scratching the surface. In some relationships, the schism between Intuitive and Observant traits is too great to bridge, and both partners may spend a lot of time thinking about what they are doing wrong, why their significant other seems to misunderstand them all the time and why they just do not listen. In other cases, both individuals

are able to acknowledge their differences and turn them into strengths, thus neutralizing each other's weaknesses.

Actually, the main difference between Intuitive and Observant traits is quite easy to define. The Intuitive partner will focus on abstract things – ideas, introspection, possibilities, dreams and connections between events. Intuitives are *imaginaries* who spend more time thinking about the future than the present. The Observant partner, on the other hand, will prioritize concrete things such as objects, senses, observation, facts and daily matters. Observant types are *doers* who focus on the present moment rather than the future.

Not surprisingly, this affects everything else, from observational abilities to communication styles. It is absolutely crucial that you both take time to understand how the other person thinks and processes things – all other traits fade in comparison. It is also worth noting that Observant personality types dominate society and this often leads to Intuitives' traits being dismissed as impractical or unrealistic – the Observant partner should avoid labeling their partner as “odd” or getting frustrated because “this is not what most people do”. Respect the differences.

If all goes well, however, you are likely to have a very rewarding relationship. The Intuitive partner will be able to inspire their significant other and come up with a myriad of interesting ideas, always keeping the relationship fresh and interesting. The Observant partner will be able to ensure that those ideas are grounded in reality, as well as handle practical matters that the Intuitive may forget. As always, communication is key in such relationships – there will be plenty of misunderstandings, especially at the very beginning, but they are unlikely to cause lasting damage if both partners are open-minded and willing to compromise.

Tips for your partner:

1. **Be patient.** Your Intuitive partner is likely to have difficulties handling practical tasks or noticing things.

2. **Improve your introspection skills.** You are likely to be practical and realistic, but it is also often necessary to spend some time reflecting on things. Forget the practical world and let yourself dream every once in a while.
3. **Be imaginative.** Observant types often focus too much on routines or physical things. Embrace your imagination and do not be afraid of exploring ideas without knowing whether they are actually practical or implementable.
4. **Remember to think about the future.** You are likely to focus either on the past or the present – find some time to think about the future as well, no matter how scary this may be. This does not mean that you should make complex long-term plans – simply imagine and explore possibilities in your mind. Your Intuitive partner is probably doing this all the time – you need to meet each other halfway.

Tips for you:

1. **Be patient.** Your Observant partner is likely to have difficulties understanding some of your ideas.
2. **Improve your observation skills.** Your imagination is a great asset, but it is not going to help when, for example, you have to remember your partner's favorite perfume or where you put the car keys.
3. **Keep your feet on the ground.** Intuitives often overestimate their abilities, enthusiastically embracing new and exciting ideas without thinking about the actual implementation.
4. **Remember to enjoy the present.** You are likely to spend way too much time thinking about the future. Find a way to enjoy the present as well – time flows quickly. Your Observant partner will certainly be able to help you with this.

### *A Thinking (T) Partner*

A Thinker-Thinker relationship is usually free of drama and emotional arguments – there will be disagreements, but they will be more reminiscent of calm, factual discussions than emotional storms. This does not necessarily mean that your disagreements will always be easier to overcome compared to arguments between a Thinker and a Feeler, or between two Feelers – you will simply argue at a different level.



It is also important to point out that the dominance of the Thinking trait does not mean that the individual is unemotional. Both Thinkers and Feelers are capable of deep feelings – however, Thinkers tend to hide those feelings from the outside world. They want to stay in control, to not lose their heads regardless of the circumstances – and this is what creates that aura of indifference. Do not assume that your partner is completely calm and happy just because they are not showing their emotions.

This takes us to one of the main challenges in Thinker-Thinker relationships – the expression of feelings. In all likelihood, you are both used to keeping your emotions inside, protecting your inner core from outside interference. This usually works very well in a professional environment, but romantic relationships come with a different set of requirements. There will be times when you will have to support your partner emotionally, express your feelings for him or her, or simply provide encouragement.

These things may not come naturally to you, and it is very likely that you will feel quite vulnerable in such situations – however, it is important that both partners make a conscious effort to open up from time to time, showing what they truly feel.

Tips for both individuals:

1. **Do not be afraid to share your feelings.** You do not have to pretend that you are a highly rational robot in order for your partner to respect you. Expressing your feelings is perfectly OK.
2. **Be open-minded.** As Thinkers, you may find it difficult to tolerate a point of view that does not correspond to the facts you know. Accept the fact that your partner may have a different opinion.
3. **Be careful with criticism.** As Thinkers, you are likely to be quite resistant to criticism, but that does not mean that you should be dishing it out every time your partner makes a minor mistake. Just because there was little emotional reaction does not mean that your comments did not hurt.
4. **Know how to relax.** There is no need to contain yourself when you are having fun with your partner – learn to stop worrying about whether something makes sense.

### *A Feeling (F) Partner*

A Thinker-Feeler relationship can be extremely rewarding, as both individuals will be able to teach each other how to look at things from an entirely different perspective. However, it is crucial that both you and your partner understand and respect your differences – there is nearly always some unjustified criticism coming from both sides. The Thinker complains that their partner is too emotional or irrational, and the Feeler responds by saying that the Thinker is cold and heartless. Such criticism becomes even more damaging when the Thinker is a woman and the Feeler is a man, with various social expectations coming into play as well.

Just as the dominance of the Thinking trait does not mean that the individual is unemotional, the dominance of the Feeling trait does not mean that the individual is irrational – they are simply using a different set of criteria, putting harmony and sensitivity above cold, hard facts. Feelers tend to show their feelings quite clearly, as opposed to containing them as Thinkers do – however, their decision process is still perfectly rational.

Both of these perspectives are perfectly valid and this is one of the most important lessons you will have to learn in your relationship. If both partners are tolerant and open-minded, a Thinker-Feeler relationship can be very inspiring and successful, with the Thinker making fact-based decisions and the Feeler bringing in warmth and harmony into the relationship.

Tips for your partner:



1. **Be tolerant.** Remember that your partner may be more interested in facts than in what other people feel – they are likely to focus on finding a rational solution.
2. **Stay calm.** Try not to take criticism personally – in some cases, your partner will simply be criticizing an idea or assessing a situation, not pointing out your flaws.
3. **Observe.** Do not assume that your partner is completely calm and happy just because they are not showing their emotions.
4. **Be patient.** In all likelihood, your partner will not be as good as you are at gauging other people's emotional state – consequently, there will be times when they will completely misunderstand your emotions or get frustrated by not being able to deduce what you want to say. Thinkers are used to dealing with data, not emotions.

#### Tips for you:

1. **Be tolerant.** Remember that your partner may not value the facts as much as you do – they are likely to prioritize harmony, values and morals.
2. **Observe.** Your partner is likely to be good at gauging other people's emotional state and they may expect the same from you – try to learn how to read the cues. Yes, it can be frustrating to hear “I am fine” when something is obviously wrong, but bear in mind that this is simply a mismatch of expectations. You are used to dealing with data, they are used to dealing with emotions.
3. **Be careful with criticism.** Feelers tend to be very vulnerable to criticism – be careful when you are pointing something out and try to do this in a calm, non-confrontational manner.
4. **Know how to relax.** There is no need to contain yourself when you are having fun with your partner – learn to stop worrying about whether something makes sense.

#### *A Judging (J) Partner*

Judgers enjoy planning and committing to things as opposed to keeping their options open. Prospectors, on the other hand, like to keep their options open, always looking for alternatives and opportunities. A relationship between a Judger and a Prospector may often be rocky and challenging, but there is a lot of



potential as well if both partners are willing to take time to explore and understand each other's differences.

The main difficulty is going to be the fact that you will likely hold diametrically opposite views when it comes to planning, and executing those plans. The Judger will try to come up with an agenda and then stick to it until the end. The Prospector will refuse to lay out all the possibilities and probabilities, making things up as they go along - and then maybe even abandoning the project once the most interesting task has been completed. Not surprisingly, both partners can easily frustrate each other if these traits are not addressed or understood.

However, there are two sides to every story and Judger-Prospector relationships are not an exception. Judgers' planning and scheduling inevitably come with a degree of inflexibility and this can bring tension into the relationship - which can then be defused by the easygoing Prospector. Likewise, Prospectors can be indecisive or even somewhat lazy, only focusing on the fun tasks and ignoring the rest - this can be counterbalanced by the driven and dutiful Judger. As long as both partners refrain from name-calling and are willing to compromise, these differences can be turned into major strengths, covering each partner's respective weaknesses.

In order to achieve this, you will have to make a conscious effort to meet each other halfway. The Judging partner should not be afraid to experiment or simply be more spontaneous every once in a while, even if that means changing their habits or long-held views. Similarly, the Prospecting partner should resist the urge to always seek something new and exciting, even when it is very difficult to stick to the plan or manage all the chores. In all likelihood, each partner will be willing to help their significant other with things that they find challenging, but it is unreasonable to expect them to do this every single time. There needs to be a balance between Judger's stability and Prospector's spontaneity, and you will both have to decide where that balance is in your relationship.

Tips for you:

1. **Communicate.** Your partner's inflexibility or desire to have everything planned out will often frustrate you. Do not resort to name-calling and try to understand what drives them and how

you can both support each other. Remember that your partner is used to putting their plans and schedules above play and rest - they may find it quite difficult to step back and relax.

2. **Focus.** As a Prospector, you probably enjoy trying out new things and often wonder whether the grass is greener on the other side. Learn to stick to your tasks and do not let your mind drift away when there is a job to be done.
3. **Watch your environment.** You will likely have a much higher tolerance for disorder compared to your Judging partner. Do not ignore your housekeeping duties.
4. **Do not be picky.** Prospectors tend to balk at doing routine, menial tasks, often wandering off in search of something more exciting. Not all work is fun, but you should make a conscious effort to do your fair share of household duties.

Tips for your partner:

1. **Communicate.** Your partner's indecisiveness or relaxed attitude will often frustrate you. Do not resort to name-calling and try to understand what drives them and how you can both support each other. Remember that your partner may not be as interested in plans and schedules as you are - they are used to keeping their options open.
2. **Be open-minded.** As a Judger, you may find it challenging to accept the fact that there may be more than one right answer to a problem. Try not to be stubborn and argumentative in cases where your partner disagrees with you.
3. **Experiment.** Your tendency to plan and prepare may make things difficult when there is a need to experiment or try something new. Learn to let go and act spontaneously from time to time.
4. **Do not exhaust yourself.** Your desire to get things done can bring a lot of stress into your life and into the relationship. Learn to step back and relax - the world is not going to collapse if you miss a self-imposed deadline.

### *A Prospecting (P) Partner*

As Prospectors, you will rarely get stressed or have difficulties finding time for fun. Your playfulness and ability to spot opportunities will ensure that the relationship is never boring and you both have interesting things to do.

On the other hand, there are two sides to every story and Prospector-Prospector relationships are not an exception. Spontaneity and improvisation inevitably come with a degree of instability and this can cause tension in the relationship. For instance, Prospectors are likely to balk at planning or doing routine, menial tasks, often finding it difficult to focus and wandering off in search of something more exciting - and since you both share the Prospecting trait, there may be no one to pick up the slack.

Some Prospectors can also be indecisive or even somewhat lazy, only focusing on things they find interesting and ignoring the rest - if this cannot be counterbalanced by their significant other, the practical side of the relationship can quickly become problematic. Furthermore, there are times in every relationship when it is necessary to plan for the future and stick to those plans, regardless of how challenging that is - such situations may cause stress for Prospectors as well. You both will probably find examples in your lives that illustrate such traits. That being said, recognizing the problem is already half of the solution - if you are both willing to make conscious efforts to recognize and address your weaknesses, then there is no reason why a Prospector-Prospector relationship could not be as stable as a relationship where one or both of the partners are Judges.

Tips for both individuals:

1. **Communicate.** Your partner's indecisiveness or relaxed attitude will often frustrate you - and vice versa. Do not resort to name-calling and try to figure out how you can both support each other.
2. **Focus.** As Prospectors, you probably enjoy trying out new things and often wonder whether the grass is greener on the other side. Learn to stick to your tasks and do not let your mind drift away when there is a job to be done.
3. **Watch your environment.** You both are likely to have a high tolerance for disorder, but that does not mean you should ignore your housekeeping duties. Split the tasks and do not postpone them until the very last minute.
4. **Do not be picky.** Prospectors tend to balk at doing routine, menial tasks, often wandering off in search of something more exciting. Not all work is fun, but sometimes it is necessary to get things done regardless of how boring they are.

5. **Learn to plan.** There will be times when you will have to think about the future and plan for it. That does not necessarily mean that you will have to stop looking for opportunities or be unable to keep your options open - however, it is important to find time to sit down together and discuss the direction in which the relationship is heading.

### *Assertive or Turbulent?*

The format of this section differs from those of the other traits, simply because we see this final trait as a variant of the personality rather than an integral part of the personality type itself. However, the importance of this trait should not be understated, as it determines how confident we are in our abilities and decisions, which certainly affects our behavior in romantic relationships.

Assertive individuals tend to be emotionally stable, calm and relaxed – they do not easily get upset or excited, keeping their emotions even-keeled. Their calm temper allows them to sort out any disagreements without much stress, as opposed to being rattled by even the most insignificant issues. Furthermore, individuals with this personality trait tend to be quite optimistic and content about their achievements and about life in general. That said, this relaxed attitude can also encourage Assertive individuals to not worry too much about goals or self-improvement in their relationships. Their self-confidence often overshadows any signs that might make less sure individuals question whether more work needs to be done.

In contrast, Turbulent individuals tend to be much more self-conscious and more reactive to stress. They are prone to experiencing emotional roller coasters, perhaps feeling at the top of the world in the morning and being overrun by negative thoughts by evening. Turbulent types also tend to be more success-driven and perfectionistic than Assertive ones, often worrying way too much about their performance, image or future. On the other hand, this desire to do their best and their never-ending quest for improvement often help these individuals achieve impressive heights in their careers, or to pleasantly surprise their other half, simply because they really care about whether they are good enough.

The Assertive trait is often viewed as preferable – after all, what’s not to like about being self-confident and relaxed? However, somewhat ironically, being resistant to stress and pressure may not always translate into being more successful, even in romance. Despite being more prone to emotional swings

and worrying, Turbulent individuals are also likely to be more reflective and organized, often pushing themselves harder than necessary. It is exactly that “must do better” attitude that makes them put more effort into their relationships. Depending on other traits, Assertive individuals may also be more likely to take risks – where a Turbulent person may hesitate and weigh their options, an Assertive one may trust themselves just a little too much and make careless mistakes.

Ultimately, though, everything boils down to each partner’s willingness to recognize and address both the individual weaknesses inherent in each trait, and the potential ways their respective traits may complement or clash with each other. It is also important to remember that many things depend on how strongly expressed the trait is – the higher the score, the starker the characteristics are likely to be.

Let’s briefly discuss the three potential combinations between Assertive and Turbulent partners.

### **If both partners are Assertive**

This is probably the most straightforward combination. You are likely to be confident, relaxed optimists, quite happy with your relationship and where it is going. If you are both Extraverted and Assertive, you are also likely to be more satisfied with life in general. You may rarely experience strong positive emotions, but you will not have many negative ones either. You also probably feel quite relaxed about your work and social status, instead trusting yourselves and paying more attention to what you want, not what others say you should do.

On the other hand, you need to be aware of the tendency to assume that everything is OK. The ability to simply not be perturbed by occasional issues in your relationship can cause you to miss crucial signs that something is moving in the wrong direction or that you may potentially face bigger issues down the road. Too much confidence can be just as bad as too little. Even if everything seems great and there is nothing that can upset you, finding some time for reflection and thinking about improvement can be a very healthy exercise.

### **If one partner is Assertive and the other is Turbulent**

As with all other traits, if partners are on opposite sides of the scale, there is a lot of potential for both mutual growth and for various misunderstandings. With the Assertive partner being the decisive, calm

and level-headed half, and the Turbulent partner being the cautious, sensitive and self-conscious one, it is easy to see that they can both help and hurt each other. In such relationships, it is important to understand each other's strengths and weaknesses instead of assuming that there is something wrong with the other person's attitude.

If you are the Assertive individual in the relationship, you should recognize that your Turbulent partner is much more emotionally reactive and vulnerable to stressful situations. They may be more pessimistic, anxious and shy – however, the Turbulent trait also pushes such individuals to reflect on their decisions and to try to improve themselves and their relationships as much as possible. As a positive side effect, Turbulent individuals are also likely to be more organized, driven and motivated. If they are able to master their emotions and use them as a driving force instead of simply giving in to their mood swings, this trait can actually be quite beneficial in a romantic relationship.

Similarly, if you are the Turbulent individual in your relationship, you should understand that your partner's calmness and relaxed attitude do not mean that they are unsupportive or disinterested in working on the relationship. Being less likely to feel nervous in challenging situations, Assertive individuals may seem somewhat detached or blasé, especially from the perspective of someone who is Turbulent – however, it is precisely that emotional stability that should be utilized wherever possible. While it is true that Assertive individuals may sometimes be too self-confident and not care much about achieving the best possible results where a good outcome is “good enough”, this level-headedness can also be invaluable in emotionally charged or unpredictable situations.

With this in mind, you and your partner should both work on covering each other's weaknesses with your respective strengths instead of focusing on your differences and trying to “fix” each other. For instance, the Assertive individual can act as an emotional bedrock for their much more sensitive partner, showing that there is always a bright side, reassuring their other half that the matter at hand may not be worth stressing about, and encouraging them to put their perfectionism aside in order to take a bolder, riskier step every now and then.

Similarly, the Turbulent individual can bring more organization and goal-setting into the couple's life. Their hard work and success-driven attitude pushes both partners to grow and develop instead

remaining content with where they are. The presence of the Turbulent trait may also act as a safeguard against decisions whose potential consequences may be underestimated by the Assertive partner, who may not care too much about choosing the best possible option or worry about how their actions may be perceived by others.

### **If both partners are Turbulent**

This combination is likely to be the most tempestuous of all, with both partners leaning towards the emotional and anxious side of the scale. While you will both probably experience very strong positive emotions, they will be accompanied by negative feelings as well – it is in those moments that both you and your partner must remember to take a couple of deep breaths and to refocus your thoughts and emotions. Otherwise there is a risk that you will end up fuelling each other's anxiety, with minor frustrations boiling over and becoming full-blown crises. Turbulent individuals are vulnerable to stress and you both may need to make a conscious effort to find mutually acceptable ways to overcome it and relax instead of stressing each other out even further.

That said, the Turbulent trait can also work in your relationship's favor, if you are both able to recognize and address its accompanying weaknesses. Being reflective and self-conscious, you likely find the time to think about both the present and the future, readjusting your course as you go instead of blindly trusting yourselves. While this may lead to plenty of soul-searching conversations around the dinner table, focusing on all the stressors in your lives, the perfectionism and sensitivity shared by Turbulent partners also encourages you to address those issues and to try to find good solutions instead of writing them off as irrelevant and going on with your lives. Nearly any weakness can be turned into a strength, and this is an excellent example.

## **Type Combinations**

With all possible trait combinations covered, let us now take a look at the relationship dynamics between different type groups. A personality type is much more than just a sum of its traits, and romantic relationships are one the areas where that is particularly evident.

### *Analyst – Analyst Romance*

Old saws would have us believe that “opposites attract” as though the human heart were a magnet. So, what happens when two people within a personality group take on a romance? What happens when two Analysts meet and fall in love?

Fortunately for Analysts who do, no two people are alike even if they share the same basic personality traits. There are adaptations and nuances that prevent a relationship between two Analysts from being the same as looking into a mirror. Degrees of Introversion and Extraversion can also come into play. There can be plenty of the differences that keep a relationship interesting even among two of the same type.

When two Analyst come together romantically, the emphasis will more likely be on intellectual stimulation rather than emotional. That’s not to say that they are incapable of emotions or passion. Their feelings can, in fact, run deeply. But expressing them is not typically their strong suit. They often feel a little disoriented when a situation becomes too laden with emotion. Love can blossom as a primal response to another, and it can defy fitting into a systemic structure which would provide Analysts with an anchor they can appreciate. Sometimes people with whom we fall in love do not neatly match our preconceived checklists.

Having said that, the intellectual approach that two Analysts share can provide a foundation for endless stimulating conversations and common interests. A dinner together may be less about small talk and more about big ideas that include “what if” scenarios to explore. A couple who are both Analysts may even come to see each other as a refuge from the small and the inane world they have to put up with outside of their relationship.

A fictional example of this might be Frank (Francis) and Claire Underwood from the American version of the House of Cards. No matter what has happened with his Machiavellian plots during the day, Frank always returns home at night to Claire who understands him. She is his refuge from the others who they clearly see as their inferiors. This Analyst power couple may not have the most classically romantic relationship, but the viewer cannot deny their closeness. (That’s not to say their relationship is entirely without passion. It’s just muted in favor of their shared strengths.) Their lives are deeply intertwined,



and they work as a single unit. Of course, most Analysts are not like the morally-challenged Frank and Claire Underwood. However, this television couple does explore the idea that not all love is about soft romantic evenings. It's not just about two people whispering sweet nothings to each other. This ever cerebral pairing may look unique and even somewhat eccentric to those looking in.

Many Analysts have difficulty reading the emotions of others. That includes other Analysts. They may spend more time deconstructing and rebuilding their relationship than they do experiencing it. They may try to make it "better" in theory or in principle rather than just plunging in and living it. Without question, there can be an emotional distance between two people having an "intellectual" relationship, but another Analyst might not be bothered by that distance. However, romance can be messy and people hurt each other's feelings. When the pieces don't fit snugly together, Analysts may go to their default position of logic rather than empathy – potentially creating problems.

Typically, Analysts will come to a relationship with a list of expectations that they expect from the person. They need to learn to let go of these preconceptions. They may also need to learn to accept that even the most logical human contains complex mysteries that are hard to understand on a rational level. If they don't learn to embrace their partners as they "are" rather than as they "should be", this can be problematic with Analysts in relationship to anyone.

Organization can also be problematic for the Analyst couple. If both of these Intuitive types involve themselves mainly with the abstract, the larger ideas and the future, who's going to make sure dinner is on the table every evening? Who's going to buy the groceries in the first place? When you have two visionary types together, practical matters sometimes get lost or relegated to a lower place on a couple's list of priorities. It's necessary for an Analyst couple to concentrate on attending to life's more practical matters. A systematic list of chores and household deadlines can be helpful in making sure that someone pays the bills and keeps the house.

Analysts can be loyal, responsible, and stimulating partners. However, they have to be careful not to be too exacting of each other. Expanding their comfort zone to include a degree of flexibility and adding some spontaneity may be a necessary part of growing together as an Analyst couple.

**Tips for Analyst Couples:**

- With another Analyst you have someone who understands your approach to the world. Enjoy and share your imagination and your visions. This is a great opportunity to be yourself and not feel pressured to be something that you're not. You don't necessarily have to look like other couples.
- Experiment with living more in the "here and now" and accept that human beings are complex. You may never understand everything about your partner. Don't be afraid to spend some time in ambiguity and not knowing. Learn to "free-fall" occasionally and try not to be controlling.
- With two Analysts, it may become necessary to organize yourselves better. You may need to create a system to assure that your life together runs smoothly on a practical level.
- Talk about the things that bother you. It's too easy to try to figure things out rather just talking to your partner. While Analysts often have powerful mental gifts, it's unlikely that one of them is mind-reading. Be careful about assumptions. If necessary, think about communicating with your partner as "collecting data".

*Analyst – Diplomat Romance*

Diplomats and Analysts share an intuitive view of the world. Both live with ideas and abstractions and this distinguishes these types from Sentinels and Explorers. On a first date, this common area may become something that provides quick cohesion between two from these types. While one focuses more on systems and rationality and the other on humanity and values, they both love talking about big ideas. Neither type has much patience for small talk. There are endless subjects to talk about since both fill their mental landscapes with creative concepts and dreams.

The Analysts may feel that Diplomats balance them by providing a sense of warmth and emotion that are not usually traits Analysts trade in. Diplomats, on the other hand, may like Analysts for their rationality and their ability to work with ideas in a smart and unique fashion. Both may represent some ideal that they admire because it is complementary to their own approaches. Diplomats may romanticize the Analysts' reasoned approach while the Analyst may appreciate the emotional depth Diplomats bring

to their relationships. Both see sex as something beyond just physical stimulation and release. They bring creativity, imagination and meaning to the bedroom, and this can make their sex lives powerful. Both groups are loyal to their partners and, once they've found the right person, commit fully and responsibly to that person.

However, there is no such thing as the perfect pairing and complications will always need to be addressed no matter what the type. An obstacle this pairing may face might be the differing views of romantic gestures and emotional expression. Some Analysts may find romantic overtures to be silly and illogical. Diplomats lead from the heart and find such overtures important when entering a relationship. An Analyst may think that buying flowers only to have them sit in a vase to die is a trivial gesture, and, unless told to, may not consider sending a bouquet. Diplomats, on the other hand, may feel the flowers serve as some larger symbol of appreciation. Diplomats will give such things metaphorical meanings.

Analysts may forgo some of the rituals of courtship or they may just "phone it in" having learned that others expect such behaviors. Diplomats may feel some disappointment and will probably pick up intuitively on something that does not come from the Analysts' hearts. While not as much a problem once they get to know one another, at the beginning of a relationship when romantic gestures send messages of interest, this can be a little confusing. This "romantic gesture gap" might continue throughout their relationship, but its' impact will lessen as the partners gain more understanding of each other. In time, Diplomats will learn the Analysts have a deeper, more thoughtful romantic interest that they don't always expressed outwardly. In turn, the Analysts will learn the Diplomats are not simply being silly when it comes to such gestures.

Analysts may be too quick to offer a solution to a problem when Diplomats are simply looking for someone to listen to them and to "feel" their problem. The Diplomats' concern for the feelings of others may seem "squishy" and inefficient to the Analyst partner. Analysts will seek the most rational solution to a problem, even if sometimes that means they sacrifice the feelings of others. Taking time to get to know one another and to appreciate these differences can smooth over potential conflicts for Analyst / Diplomat couples. Learning and discussing each other's personality type can be a good conversation starter when it comes to these matters.

Organization can also be problematic for the Analyst – Diplomat couple. If both of these Intuitive types involve themselves mainly with the abstract, the larger ideas and the future, who's going to make sure dinner is on the table every evening? Who's going to buy the groceries in the first place? When you have two visionary types together, practical matters sometimes get lost or relegated to a lower place on a couple's list of priorities. It's necessary for an Analyst – Diplomat couple to concentrate on attending to life's more practical matters. A systematic list of chores and household deadlines can be helpful in making sure that someone pays the bills and keeps the house.

**Tips for Analysts with Diplomats:**

- Understand that sometimes the romantic gesture is a metaphor for something deeper with your Diplomat partner. It's not something silly. Diplomats enjoy symbols and infusing meaning into things, and it can be quite an important expression of who they are.
- Know that when Diplomat partners bring a problem to you, they are not always looking for a solution as much as they are little empathy. Providing one of your trademark rational solutions may miss the target entirely. Try asking questions and listening. Don't be afraid to ask if it's okay before offering your fix.

**Tips for Diplomats with Analysts:**

- Understand that the lack of emotional expression or a gesture does not necessarily signify a lack of interest on the part of your Analyst partner. It just means they that romance is sometimes a second language that doesn't trip easily off the tongue of Analysts. Don't mistake that for disinterest.
- Know that when your Analyst partner offers solutions to the problems, it may sometimes appear cold and callous. To them, the rational solution serves the greater good and is, therefore, valuable to others. You may not like their means to an end, but, with discussion, you may find their intent ultimately comes from caring.

## Tips for Both

- Should the relationship become a life commitment, it may become necessary to organize yourselves better. You may need to create a system to assure that your life together runs smoothly on a practical level.
- Learn to deliberately spend some time in the “here and now”. Both of you tend to spend a lot of time in a wonderful world of theory and abstractions. A dose of the present can bring some added texture to your relationship. Two Intuitive types constantly rearranging the universe can be exhausting. Add a little variety.

### *Analyst – Sentinel Romance*

Whenever an Intuitive person and an Observant person sit down to get to know each other, there are subtle or not so subtle differences. Analysts have heads full of ideas, visions for the future and complicated systems. They seek and absorb as much knowledge as they can and there is a constant deconstruction and reconstruction of concepts on a higher order going on all the time with the Analysts. There is change and evolution constantly in the air around them. Sentinels, on the other hand, make up their mind and settle on how their lives should be early in their lives. They might be reluctant to change but will do so while still clinging to how things were before. Abstract ideas and visions seem impractical to them. Attending to what’s going on in front of their noses makes much more sense to them.

Let’s consider how each type dates. Analysts find dating a difficult but necessary task. Before they become serious about it, they may go out for fun – but probably not that much. However, once they decide it’s time to find a mate, it becomes a serious task. They usually have a list of qualifications for a romantic partner in their minds. These will come from some thoughtful consideration of who might work as the perfect mate.

In a similar nature, Sentinels are looking for someone based on their own preconceptions. Their list – which they probably never create in a conscious way like the Analysts – is drawn from the traditions they know and the things they’ve experienced. The characteristics they will consider in a mate will have a lot to do with societal expectations. So, unlike the romantic Diplomat or the adventurous Explorer, these two types are more likely to know what they are seeking and more or less work from a shopping

list. While this may not in itself bring them together, both have determined the nature of their relationship in advance. Online dating might be right up both of their alleys.

Once they do meet, the Analysts' serious natures, intelligence and their intense focus on hard-work may be the qualities that impress Sentinels. This may speak to the Sentinels' need for a stable life with a good spouse. On the other hand, Sentinels may impress Analysts with their organizational abilities, attention to detail and their regard for social conventions and family. These may be areas where the Analysts might feel they are lacking. While Analysts solve problems in the lofty reaches of abstract thought, Sentinels may help keep them grounded by taking care of the concerns of everyday life.

There is a particular burden on the Analyst to care for the feelings of the Sentinel. Analysts can be condescending and come across as though they think they are superior. The Analysts' attitude can be difficult for every type, but consider then what the Sentinel does in an Analyst and Sentinel relationship. Such contempt can be especially hurtful when you consider the effort most Sentinels are willing to put into creating a stable home. And while Sentinels usually don't ask for praise, it energizes them when they receive it, and they may become passive aggressive when they don't. Analysts need to make it a point to recognize the things the Sentinel does for them. Since both types are loyal, caring for the feelings of the Sentinel is not about preserving the relationship as much as it is about improving the quality of life for the whole family.

Whenever you have an Intuitive type with an Observant type there is the possibility for some conflict about life's practical matters. An Analyst may tolerate dirty dishes in a sink a little longer than a Sentinel. An Intuitive – Observant couple has to be careful to not let such things become an exaggerated problem or let it be used as a weapon in a fight. Sentinels sometimes have an odd way of nurturing and criticizing all in the same breath. Trying to make an Analyst into someone who pays more attention to day-to-day details will likely be a daunting if not impossible task. Choosing battles wisely and taking a position of acceptance might help the Sentinel cope with this.

Lastly, Analysts might do a disservice to the relationship should they begin to treat it as a system that needs to be improved. Sentinels will not connect with this and may even feel that it threatens the stability of what they have worked so hard to build. They will likely become hurt and defensive. Both types would

do well to learn about the other's personality type and to discover their partner's preferences for dealing with the world.

### **Tips for Analysts with Sentinels**

- Make it a point to let your partner know how much he or she has impacted your life and that you appreciate what he or she brings to it. If it helps, look at your life together as a system and take an inventory of the wonderful things your Sentinel brings to your life. And then speak up.
- Recognize that while you are all about change and innovation, your partner is about stability and tradition. Introducing a "better system" to your relationship can create anxiety for your Sentinel.

### **Tips for Sentinels with Analysts**

- Be careful with criticism. Your Analyst may not pay attention to details the way you do. They may even forget birthdays and anniversaries. Chances are you won't change this about him or her. Practice acceptance and choosing your battles carefully.
- Don't panic if your partner begins to talk about change. It's less about dissatisfaction and more about a need to fiddle with a system. Talk it out in a non-defensive manner.

### *Analyst – Explorer Romance*

As we have mentioned previously, there are some key differences between Intuitive and Observant types. When it comes to this particular type combination, those differences become very clear. Analysts have heads full of ideas, visions for the future and complicated systems. They seek and absorb as much knowledge as they can and there is a constant deconstruction and reconstruction of ideas on a higher order going on all the time with the Analysts.

Explorers on the other hand, live fully in the present. They are curious about everything – except long-winded conversations based on abstractions and ideas. They are always looking for what is new and exciting. Often they seek challenges of a material and physical nature that they can master or conquer – a musical instrument or a craft. However, both types enjoy solving things – for Analysts, its theoretical puzzles and, for Explorers, it's finding a solution to real and immediate problems.

So what happens when Explorers and Analysts meet for a date? Starting from an optimistic place, Analysts might impress Explorers with their theories for a while, as long as they can connect them to something practical. Technically-oriented Analysts talking about writing computer code, for example, may impress Explorers who typically appreciate tools and devices. However, should Analysts go on too long and slip into the theoretical, as they often do, they may quickly lose the Explorers.

Analysts, on the other hand, may enjoy the spontaneity of the Explorers as well as the practical perspective they bring to conversations. They will appreciate Explorers who have mastered a craft. They may also be attracted to the looser, fun-loving nature of the Explorers and see that characteristic as something that could balance their more serious lives. Too much spontaneity, however, may begin to color Explorers as too frivolous in the eyes of Analysts.

Should Explorers and Analysts become serious and commit to one another, each type might appreciate the other's lack of concern for social convention. There won't be much pressure in that area as there might be with a Diplomat or a Sentinel. They can go through life together near oblivious to social expectations should they choose to. They might also appreciate the breathing room likely to be granted by their partners. At times, Analysts may seem almost entirely detached from their home lives when in the middle of a project. This could work out quite well for Explorers, giving them ample time to discover more about their world in their particular way. Nobody will ever accuse a pair made up of these types of smothering each other.

While Explorers are not highly sensitive to the opinions of others, Analysts should always be aware that they can come across as condescending. Analysts can easily convey to Explorers that their work or contribution to the world may not be as "deep" and, therefore, not as important. This may come across in subtle ways, or it would not even be too far-fetched to imagine some Analysts announcing it out loud. Coming across as superior can cause a lot of hurt in a relationship, and Analysts need to learn to take care of their partners' feelings.

Explorers, on the other hand, may become impatient with the Analysts' constant hunger for more knowledge and their need to theorize about everything. Explorers might begin looking at their partners as stodgy or out-of-touch with anything the least bit interesting. While Analysts may appear at times as



though they have no feelings, the truth is they often feel quite deeply. They just don't necessarily feel comfortable expressing their emotions. An Explorer partner may learn in time that it is just as possible to hurt an Analyst's feeling as it is anyone else's. Analysts sometimes need to come out of their cloud of concepts once in a while and there's no better way than being invited to play in the Explorers' playground of discovery. So, rather than becoming irritated at what they perceive as the Analysts' stodginess, Explorers might occasionally encourage Analyst partners to come along on one of their adventures.

Finally, small details never interest Analysts nor are they usually involved with a lot that is hands-on and mundane. This may leave Explorers to deal with such matters in a shared household in their somewhat casual fashion. While it may sound like a small issue, things like this can take on exaggerated importance when the clothes are piled high in the middle of the bedroom floor. Such a couple may need to decide things like who does the laundry and when early on in their relationship before such things become a problem.

### **Tips for Explorers with Analysts**

- Invite your partner to try some new experiences with you. Perhaps a new restaurant or a cultural event. This will not only give you time together but may also contribute to balancing your Analyst's very cerebral life some.

### **Tips for Analysts with Explorers**

- Be careful with your partner's feelings. Deliberately express some appreciation for who they are and what they do. A little can go a long way with an Explorer.

### **Tips for Both**

- Discuss household duties early in a committed relationship. Your different styles of approaching such matters may make this an important discussion. Consider hiring some help from outside to handle such chores.

## *Friendships*

Many of the usual motivations for making friends – emotional support, social validation, shared routine – simply don't apply to INTPs. More likely, these concepts are met with disdain, as they prize intellectual depth above all else. It is not easy to become good friends with INTPs, but if there is a common interest and a common train of thought, the connection sparks instantly, surprising everyone else who thought they had this distant personality type pegged.



INTP friendships revolve around the exchange of ideas, theories, and concepts, and those who aren't able to keep up, or who have sharply differing tastes (don't talk to them about celebrities) find stony faces that border on rude. To INTPs, communication is often more a nuisance than a pleasure, and conversation is reserved for meaningful topics, or for people they already like enough to stick it out with. Unless there's a natural affinity for this intellectual style, few have the patience to try to penetrate their shields, and INTPs are left with a small circle of good friends.

INTPs are knowledgeable and intelligent, and have a great deal of respect for those who can keep them on their toes in this regard. They gladly help to tackle any dilemma thrown their way, offering up sound advice and rational solutions. As valuable as these qualities are though, they are not always the best approach – when it comes to emotional support or advice in dealing with matters of the heart, INTPs are at a loss.

It's not that they don't feel or can't relate – quite the contrary, they actually have very strong sentiments. But Feeling is one of INTPs' least developed traits, making their emotional reactions strong, untrustworthy, and naturally in need of being tempered by their well-trained logic and rationalism. Still waters run deep.

While they may not be able to help directly with these problems, INTPs help indirectly with unambiguous and reliable friendships. Their friends need never worry about power games, judgmental attitudes, or emotional baggage – they are liked for their minds and abilities, not their status or possessions. It may not be easy for them to establish true friendships, but once the link is made, they provide years of understanding and thought-stimulating ideas, making them well worth the effort.

Of course, none of this is to say that they don't forge friendships with different types. It's a big world out there, and if there's one thing INTPs appreciate, it's a good mystery that needs to be puzzled out. They may enjoy an intellectual discussion more than most, but they also can't help but be intrigued by a vastly different perspective that checks their assumptions and forces them to think about things from new angles.

INTPs are a little different, and an arduous childhood has likely colored certain types badly in their memories. But time crumbles all things, and old hurts should be forgotten. So how does this reserved and, perhaps, slightly standoffish personality type head down the rabbit hole to the world of day-to-day things and experiences? How do they relate to someone who gushes with feelings and sympathy and excitement, or who likes a good shot of adrenaline and horseplay, or who holds firmly traditional perspectives and beliefs?

INTPs are known for pulling together ideas into viable third options. But if they only surround themselves with like-minded individuals, they risk tunnel vision and limited perspectives to draw from. Diversity is key to the creativity INTPs prize, and we hope that with this guide, INTPs can strengthen those less-developed sides and gain confidence as they learn to identify with those who shut down in the face of criticism, or who want to share feelings without making plans about them.

They should work to expand their tight circle of friends to include Extraverted and Judging variants of the Analyst group, and into non-Analyst types as well. INTPs help others to think more broadly and to grow intellectually, and in return they are helped to actually accomplish the ideas and solutions they are so proud of, by reinforcing them with stability and follow-through. We also hope to help INTPs to develop more meaningful, deeper relationships with those friends who already share their own traits and qualities.

Even if you disagree with the suggestions laid out here, that disagreement helps to bring perspectives into sharper focus, making what was once only vaguely felt into formidable *understanding* – and that’s what these sections are all about.

## Analyst Friends

Other Analysts are a natural fit for INTPs, who share their passion for new ideas, riddles, and solutions. The friendship is defined by intellectual curiosity, rather than social or emotional support, and that’s just how they like it. INTPs enjoy that the friendships are a bit like looking into a mirror. This may sound vain, but INTPs are an uncommon type, as are Analysts in general, and they may grow accustomed to feeling like they don’t belong in most social situations. Encountering another Analyst is likely to be an invigorating breath of fresh air.

That fresh air will definitely be useful, because these friends are unlikely to run out of things to talk about. From the time they wake up to the moment they fall asleep, INTPs’ minds usually buzz with ideas, and few others are likely to be able to keep pace. Analysts love bouncing ideas back and forth, and INTPs’ intellectual versatility provides plenty of fodder for their friends to dissect piece by piece. There is even likely to be a spirit of competition, each friend challenging the other to establish a stronger foundation and rationalization for their thoughts.

These discussions are unlikely to revolve around people, feelings, or immediate plans. Instead, they will probably focus on more esoteric topics related to systems, strategies, and analyses. In fact, INTPs are unlikely to place much emphasis at all on understanding the origins of a friend’s social status or their emotional state – the past shouldn’t define the future, and emotions shouldn’t dictate a solution. Having an Analyst friend lets them pursue that mode of thought uninhibited, as it is an attitude shared by all Analyst types.

Their reliance on theories can create a rift in these friendships though. INTPs define their self-esteem by their ability to come up with creative solutions to problems, and their unique perspective lets them see problems with just about everything. Ideas are INTPs’ projections of themselves, and if discussions about

them morph into debates on their underlying merit or the soundness of their logic, as ENTP and ENTJ types sometimes try to do, INTPs can take the criticism personally.

INTPs do need to work on being more receptive to criticism of their ideas, and their friends should make an effort to phrase things constructively, (“Here’s what could make that work even better”) rather than critically (“You’re a fool and here’s why”). INTPs may not care about emotional support per se, but Analysts have a penchant for thoughtlessly brutal honesty, and INTPs have little fortitude in the face of nitpicky criticisms. If their friends go further and use personal critiques as a way of “winning” debates, it can end poorly.

When emotionally charged situations do occur, not just between friends but with things like breakups and deaths in the family, INTPs enjoy having a friend who is able to help them rationalize the situation, or to simply leave them alone about it. This has its drawbacks and can leave important things unsaid, but INTPs generally don’t appreciate profuse apologies, pity, and hugs, and this is something they need not worry about from a fellow Analyst.

If they can avoid burnout from their constant debates by becoming both a little more thick-skinned and a little more sensitive, these two types can have a tremendously stimulating and productive friendship. However, ideas and actions are two different things, and that productivity depends on the ability of INTPs and their friends to translate intellectual curiosity into a course of action – something INTPs in particular struggle with.

INTPs often lack the strength of follow-through of Judging types and the step-by-step practicality of Observant types. This leads to the specter of stagnation – perhaps not in terms of intellectualism, but in the practical application of that intellectualism. This only reinforces INTPs’ reputation for having their heads in the clouds, a very real weakness that is especially noticeable in INTP – INTP friendships.

## Diplomat Friends

INTP – Diplomat friendships are likely to begin with an instant connection, owing to their shared Intuitive trait. However, unlike the connection with Analysts, this is more likely a mysterious, intangible attraction, a current under still waters, than a sense of mutual recognition and understanding. Both sides

can recognize in each other the ability to see beyond face value, into a deeper, more complex machine. The fact that Diplomats see that machine in terms of human, or even spiritual, interaction rather than rational systems is unlikely to phase open-minded INTPs, and vice versa – rather, they'll both be fascinated by new perspectives as insightful as their own, something not always easy to find.

Much like Analysts, Diplomat friends are full of fresh ideas to explore. INTPs think of what would work best from a perspective of dispassionate efficiency and productivity, if everyone would just do it their way. Diplomats explore ways of getting everyone on the same page, to work together for the common good, if only there were a worthy goal. If these two friends use their strengths in tandem, taking rational and efficient ideas and showing how they can create a more idyllic reality, they can be a force to be reckoned with, especially in the workplace.

But that's assuming they can avoid stepping on each other's toes too much. INTPs have little desire to lower their shields and express their feelings, something Diplomats crave. Further, INTPs' tendency to avoid thinking about emotions as anything but irrational wrenches in their clockwork is likely to make them appear cold, bitter, or even cynical – a capital offence (to the extent that they believe in such a thing) to idealistic and empathic Diplomats.

Likewise Diplomats' far-reaching altruism may strike INTPs as unrealistic, or maybe even inauthentic, making them think to themselves "you can't honestly believe all that, can you?" INTPs' thought process is almost designed to bypass the human equation to find, ironically, ideal solutions. Meanwhile Diplomats believe that humans *are* the equation, constantly moving forward so long as they are motivated and engaged.

Neither type is comfortable with open disagreement or conflict, both are sensitive to criticism, and both believe strongly in their ideas. If INTPs' motivations are misread, something they are particularly intolerant of, or INTPs themselves deliver a particularly cutting criticism to make their point, it could create a divide that neither side is willing or able to bridge. All that being said though, most of their conflicts can be avoided if they maintain a heightened perspective, which happens to be their specialty.

Ultimately, they both want the same thing: a world that functions better. Diplomats, especially ENFPs and ENFJs, help their friends recognize the importance of emotional and social health and expression. INTPs help their friends develop their analytical abilities, placing that raw compassion, idealism, and leadership into a system for achieving a tangible good. This is likely to be a friendship that flies high for many years, enduring both distance and time.

## Sentinel Friends

Friendships with Sentinels rarely begin with that instant connection that Analysts and Diplomats enjoy. Rather, they're likely to be defined by a growing sense of appreciation for their mutual differences. INTPs have significant shortcomings when it comes to steadiness and reliability, often forgetting their statements and agreements because they've come to disagree with them on further consideration. Sentinels, governed by tradition and reliability under any circumstances, stick to their projects with grit and determination, seeing them through to the end no matter what.

INTPs are often impressed by and even envious of the energy and focus that Sentinels are able to maintain moment to moment, day to day, even year to year. That kind of hearty strength of character isn't something they're accustomed to, and they respect it. For their part, Sentinels appreciate INTPs' mental flexibility, their ability to maneuver around an idea, pressing and poking from every angle until the perfect solution is discovered.

ESTJs and ISTJs in particular are results-driven, always seeking out what works, and are likely to appreciate the way their INTP friends constantly seem to stumble across viable solutions out of the blue. But it takes time and mutual experience for these types to develop a good rapport – these are friendships born of circumstance, as coworkers or through a mutual friend, over years.

Managed properly, these differences can be extremely satisfying for both parties, with Sentinels being able to help their INTP friends with practical, realistic outlets for their ideas. This is especially true of the Thinking variants of Sentinels, who will have no end of fun helping to implement INTPs' more technical, useable thoughts. Analysts are best known for being good with their minds, not their hands, and working with Sentinels can help INTPs to recognize that they live in a tangible world.



INTPs also have a great deal to learn from more people-oriented Sentinels such as ISFJs and ESFJs. If there's one shortcoming INTPs are famous for, it is their utter absent-mindedness when it comes to social maintenance. Likewise, if there is one strength that these Sentinels have in spades, it's their ability to follow through on social obligations and maintain relationships with steady contact and activity.

Relationships with Diplomats or fellow Analysts can sustain months of separation in stride, with them able to pick up where they left off as though no time had passed at all. Sentinels, though, are rooted in day-to-day happenings, where time does fade connections.

INTPs' Sentinel friends can help them to simply be aware of that passage of time, of the fact that people's interests and feelings change, and to recognize that if they are left too long, friendships can disappear. INTPs should heed this strength and use some of their spontaneity to join in on their friends' social calls, because Sentinels' loyalty, though durable, cannot last forever, and INTPs may find themselves more isolated than even they like.

If they don't appreciate their differences, the friendship is likely to fall flat. These personality types face significant challenges – Sentinels can view the INTP type as wishy-washy and unreliable, an intolerable shortcoming for a group defined by dependability and loyalty. They say that half the job is showing up, but INTPs may simply not have the energy required to do so consistently. Participating with enthusiasm in the sort of planned activities Sentinels are likely to arrange is a taller order still.

This aversion to upkeep is where friendships that may look good on paper (say, mutual hobbies and tastes) break down. The way those interests are explored are often just incompatible. This dynamic is especially prominent with ESFJs, INTPs' opposite. These two personalities are likely to find little common ground, either in their approach or in their goals.

ESFJs focus on social activities and gossip, with a total aversion to abstract (and sometimes impractical) rationalism, while INTPs view the discussion of celebrity and drama with genuine disdain. One is trying to create social influence and order, the other to conceive ideas and principles, and to establish independence for themselves and their friends. At best, INTPs' Prospecting quality allows them to go with the flow just long enough to finish an outing without any permanent harm.



The INTP – Sentinel friendship can be a very rewarding one if both parties recognize and appreciate the others' differences and play off each other's strengths. Sentinels can keep their INTP friends in the loop, and are rewarded with a healthy stream of ideas so the two will always have something to do. Sometimes though, the differences between the two types can simply be too much, and the best they can do is to agree to disagree on good terms.

## Explorer Friends

The INTP – Explorer friendship is likely to be a challenging one. Explorers are defined by the moment and its pleasures. They are known for being unpredictable and, to rational and distant INTPs, recklessly short-sighted. But that doesn't mean that all of these qualities are bad things – one of INTPs' chief shortcomings is their inability to lose themselves in the moment, to simply have fun and be excited about something. INTPs are all but incapable of leaping without looking for fear of getting into something they can't reason themselves out of. An Explorer friend is just what they need to show them that it's a big, beautiful world out there, to be breathed in and handled.

Likewise, as fun as the moment can be, it certainly does Explorers some good to remember that actions have consequences. Many of the freedoms that they so relish are made possible by looking ahead to see where things can lead. Being able to set sail is a wonderful thing, but you need someone beside you who knows how to read the stars.

This is the real beauty of the INTP – Explorer friendship. INTPs have so many ideas about how and why things work, but they neglect to see for themselves. They need someone in their life who is willing to prod them into adventure and discovery, to help them experience the results of their theories – they need someone who is willing to see if the sea really can be navigated. It's dangerous to do without knowing, and fruitless to know without doing. These two friends are likely to be able to meet each other halfway for many adventures.

But, while a well-harmonized pairing is possible, the more likely result, especially with Explorers' Extroverted and Feeling variants, is that the two exhaust each other. The modus operandi of most Explorers is excitement and physical pleasure, aesthetics and the senses, getting caught up in the moment

and experiencing the drama of living life with other people, moving on before the dust settles. When INTPs start analyzing with the how and why, it forces their friends out of the moment, and nothing is more exasperating. With these questions unanswered, INTPs are forced to engage unquantified, unreasoned risk, and they'll be slipping towards the exit.

Explorers may start to view their INTP friends as boring or timid, hiding in their minds and avoiding the real world. Similarly, INTPs may start to see their friends as shallow, focusing on beauty and pleasure without asking *why* it's beautiful or how it fits into a bigger picture of perception. Explorers' unwillingness to theorize can even be seen as a lack of intelligence, a terrible mistake. These friends are able to go with the others' flow for a little while. Ultimately though, if both are a little more stubborn or identify more strongly than average with their conflicting traits, they'll simply start to drift towards more compatible people.

Like with their Sentinel friends, INTPs appreciate an outlook and style that is different from their own but is still able to achieve results. Chances are that a relationship with more technical ISTPs will be a great deal of fun, with the friends challenging each other to be more effective at what they do best – devising and building systems and machines. But the more expressive Explorers, ESFP and ESTP, are likely to simply be too physically energetic and people-oriented for INTPs to keep up, even if they wanted to.

## *Parenthood*

In parenting, as with all social roles, INTPs face a robust but healthy challenge. Not naturally sensitive, INTPs struggle to identify with the raw emotions and irrationality that are standard with young children, who have yet to develop the self-control and logic that INTPs take for granted. INTPs are nevertheless incredibly devoted – perhaps not in the traditional, emotionally supportive sense, but in encouraging their children to think independently, seek out knowledge, and voice and defend their own opinions.



For INTPs knowledge is key, and they give their children the tolerance and freedom necessary to acquire it. INTP parents take a relaxed, intellectual approach, allowing their children to explore the world around them and overlooking the more minor offences along the way. Having no interest in exerting control over other human beings, INTPs allow their children to form their own principles – though they may take the opportunity of the “why?” phase to share their own perspectives and ideas, just in case.

INTPs are not particularly demanding parents, at least not in the sense that they expect their children to live a traditional life of school/career/marriage/house/kids/retirement (and in that order, thank you very much). Rather, INTP parents are demanding in an intellectual sense – they want their children to ask if this path is the best path for them, and how to go about following a different one if they need to. This level of personal freedom can be daunting, and can take a long time to come to terms with, but INTP parents are prepared to stand by their children with support and advice as long as they need it.

While there is hardly a better parent for having rational, intelligent discussions with their children, there is hardly a clumsier example when it comes to providing the emotional support that many children need, especially as they approach their teenage years. In this area, INTPs need to either rely on a more capable partner, or to take themselves far out of their comfort zones in order to empathize, without trying to clear away the tears with an endless series of rational suggestions and blunt truths.

INTPs want their children to grow up smart, independent, and tolerant, but if they want them to be well-adjusted too, they must make that effort at emotional support. Though it's a challenge for INTPs to teach empathy alongside rationality, if they can pull it off, their children can grow into confident adults who know how to ask questions, use their minds, and take care of themselves no matter what comes their way. INTPs' parenting style affords a great deal of latitude for their children, but this freedom requires INTPs' responsible guidance to ensure that it is used constructively.

Of course parenting isn't so simple that it can be summed up in a few paragraphs. There's no such thing as a default "child" as far as personality is concerned – they are separate, growing, and whole individuals, with their own wants and needs, and their own personality type to guide what kinds of information and interactions are most valuable to them.

INTPs, by the time they become parents, have had years to sort out what works for them. They prize self-determination and logical precision above just about all else. They value (or require) intelligence and emotional stability in others. They believe that the logical solution is the right one, and even have trouble distinguishing between lending another perspective when it's called for, and saying how every little thing ought to be done if it's to be done "right" – even when their children are full-grown adults.

If they by chance end up raising a child who shares the Analyst type group, INTPs have a head start in sharing these values with their children. But what happens when their children are from other, less compatible type groups? What happens if their children don't enjoy intellectual puzzles, books, grand strategy, and science? What happens if their children are impulsive and strongly emotional, behaving in ways that seem utterly irrational (but are in fact perfectly natural)?

INTPs' strengths lie in the mental, intellectual world, not practical or emotional ones. They focus on encouraging development, especially of the rational mind, and tend to sideline sensitivity as a weakness. We hope that with these suggestions, INTPs can strengthen that less-developed side of theirs and gain confidence as they learn to adapt to children who shut down in the face of criticism, or who actually want and crave clear direction and structure. We also hope to help INTP parents to develop more meaningful relationships with those children who share their own traits and qualities.

## Analyst Children

The benefits of INTPs having Analyst children are pretty easy to see. Because they share the Intuitive trait, they take in, or rather infer and create, information in much the same way. Because they share the Thinking trait, they also make decisions based on that information in much the same way. This makes communication between INTP parents and their Analyst children much more straightforward.

It also means that they enjoy many of the same activities, such as games and puzzles. INTPs aren't hands-on, adrenaline-craving people – it can be quite a relief to know that their children, especially fellow INTPs, would rather look at plants and geology along a trail or head to the library than to roughhouse or host a pumpkin-carving party. ENTP and ENTJ children challenge their parents' social awkwardness, but at least with activities that both find genuinely interesting.

However, the drawbacks and challenges are the same as in any relationship with poor diversity. Without differing perspectives, neither side is encouraged to develop their weaknesses to become better-rounded individuals. Analysts encourage growth, but they focus on the things they value: intelligence, rationality, and abstract objectivism. Emotional expression, socialization, and practical skill all suffer. Explaining why we tell the truth is easy enough, but explaining the social value of changing outfits from one day to the next, or teaching the actual process of washing clothing, is another matter.

Social and practical lessons aside, mental and emotional health is probably the most vital consideration. Analyst children struggle to understand their own emotional needs, and INTPs have poorly developed tools for encouraging such healthy expressions. This makes things easier in the short term, but if INTPs' children grow up emotionally stunted, even the best case scenario is that they just don't know how to relax and have fun. The worst case scenario is that they grow up to be cold, ruthless individuals who dominate those around them, as ENTJs can sometimes be.

It sometimes makes sense to do what's efficient over what's more fun, or to do what's necessary, even if it hurts someone's feelings. But when these behaviors become an ingrained habit, they breed unhappiness and dissatisfaction in ways that can ruin those relationships that are most rewarding. It's important for INTP parents to realize the importance of their own emotional needs, and to ensure that their children, no matter how stoic or logical they appear to be, realize theirs.

## Diplomat Children

Parent-child relationships between INTPs and Diplomats have a lot of the same advantages and difficulties that relationships with Analyst children have. Both are inspired by their imaginations and the far-flung connections they see between ideas and people. They enjoy creative games and long discussions about what things mean, but are clumsy and forgetful with practical tasks. They also share an innate understanding of moral principles – INTP parents need explain the values of honesty, integrity, and fairness only once for them to hit home with their Diplomat children.

But INTPs often treat things as fleeting, and can be insensitive in their off-hand observations. They need to understand that when they say they're disappointed, such as when they catch their children lying, that it's not seen by Diplomats as just some passing occurrence that should be avoided in the future for perfectly logical reasons – it's a deep and far-reaching breach in the trust they share.

Diplomats are sensitive, and when criticisms come from loved ones, especially with the gravity of a parent, it can be a staggering blow. Diplomats are imaginative, easily reading into things and extrapolating interpretations – if their INTP parents aren't careful, especially with more Turbulent children, a single remark can create a sense of real failure, not just in one action, but as a person.

INTP parents must take exceptional care, especially when delivering criticisms, to express that they love their children, and that nothing can change that. Even in delivering more benign advice, they need to understand that not every problem demands a solution. When their children go through a breakup, it is not helpful to explain how irrelevant the relationship probably was in the scheme of things, nor is it helpful to list the logical reasons for its failure and how they can be fixed. Sometimes, things just need to hurt for a while, whatever the cause, and Diplomat children need warmth and sensitivity, not a scheme.

Luckily for everyone involved, even Judging Diplomats are tolerant and understanding individuals, though it takes time for this quality to develop. INTPs who've made some effort at self-awareness can tell when they've stepped on their children's toes, and they ignore parental hierarchy enough to swallow their pride and apologize when needed. Both types have a powerful desire to learn and improve, and both have much to teach each other, making this relationship one of the most rewarding.

## Sentinel Children

As parents, regardless of what personality type their children may be, INTPs have an underlying expectation that their children grow up to be intelligent, independent, successful people. Sentinel children are plenty eager to meet these expectations, creating a bit of a paradox – they achieve this through obedience and respect. Sentinels strive to live up to the standards of their role models, and there's no one more natural to imitate than their own parents.

In the early years, this model works splendidly. INTPs are happy to provide activities they think should be fun, like reading and puzzles, and their Sentinel children, especially ISTJs and ISFJs, appreciate that such activities are available, and that their parents enjoy their enjoyment. As they grow and arranged activities become more complex though, INTPs feel less justified in dictating what their children do with their spare time, while their children continue to look to their parents for guidance.

It's common enough for Sentinels, especially ISFJs, to fill the gaps with activities they think their parents respect, rather than what they enjoy themselves. Whether clubs or college majors, the question that runs through their minds is "What will Mom and Dad think?" INTPs' favorite activities are often Sentinels' weaknesses, and not doing well in these areas can be harmful to their self-esteem. It's important for INTPs to take the time to really understand what their children want, and encourage it.

INTPs are perfectly capable of this, especially if they know to say more than "whatever you want to do". The problem is that the sort of activities that Sentinels enjoy, especially ESTJs and ESFJs, are also INTPs' weaknesses. Practical details like being in the right place at the right time every other weekday for practice and parents' night can be daunting for shy, forgetful INTPs.

Sentinels need practicality, social traditions, and respect for authority, so INTPs have their work cut out for them. Luckily, INTPs are eager to please as well, in their own way. They place tremendous value on self-improvement, and their children, however much they look up to their parents, serve as role models themselves. INTPs often come to genuinely respect their children's strength of character and ability to organize and coordinate things and people, and rise to the occasion.



## Explorer Children

If there's one thing INTPs enjoy, it's probing the limits of conventional wisdom and habits in order to find a better process. Lucky for them, Explorers share this passion for knowledge and efficiency, though they take a far more tangible approach. Explorers strive for a sense of mastery and personal skill, with tools and activities for ISTPs and ESTPs and beauty and people for ISFPs and ESFPs, even at a young age.

In the younger years, INTPs have no problem casting about for things and ideas their children might enjoy, and love helping them burn through everything such activities have to offer in that quest for supremacy of their art. It usually doesn't take long to get a feel for what they're passionate about either – Explorers are just so physically expressive, and when something strikes a chord, they can hardly be pulled away.

As they get older, Explorers appreciate a sense of independence and really don't require, or want, their parents to keep offering up ways to stave off boredom, which suits INTPs just fine. Explorers are very creative individuals, and if there's a need for suggestions at all, it's to help keep their energy pointed in a useful direction, or at least in a direction that spares the walls another impromptu expressionist mural.

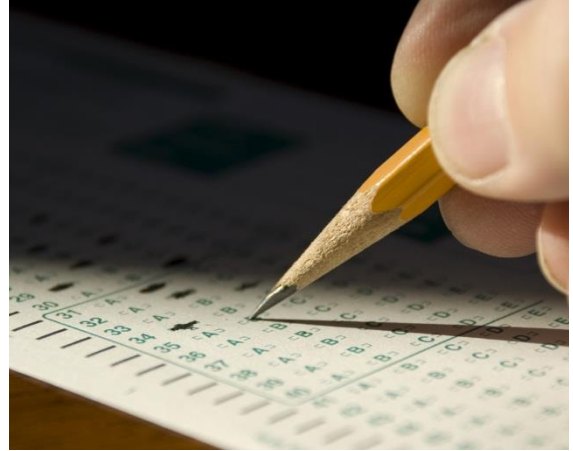
Explorers can tax even INTPs' creative juices and patience though – they are so spontaneous and their interests so fleeting that enjoying something yesterday is no guarantee for today, and even having to wait from one day to the next can spoil it. This "I want it now" attitude can be pretty frustrating for parents who pride themselves on mental discipline and self-restraint. If demands are countered with criticisms, especially towards sensitive ISFPs and ESFPs, things can fall apart especially quickly.

Explorers' sensitivity to criticism and tendency to act without thinking about the consequences is easily the biggest frustration for their INTP parents. This undeterred and often impulsive self-indulgence makes building a framework for future success especially difficult, something INTPs see as important. But at the same time, Explorers hardly want for passion, the key ingredient in the most fulfilling successes. INTPs' hands-off style is exactly what they need to have just enough guidance to stay out of trouble, and to otherwise leave their mark in their own unique way.



## *Academic Path*

Some people spend nearly one third of their lives studying. Some choose to enter the workforce earlier and don't spend as much time in classes or libraries. Regardless, most people spend at least some of their important formative years in school. No matter how long you remain in the academic world, your time there is important. These years can not only could set a specific career path, but the school experience can also affect self-esteem and other aspects of mental health well into the future – in both positive and negative ways.



INTPs are one of the rarest personality types and, because of this those around them don't always understand their sometimes bookish and standoffish ways. This can create difficulties in school. Knowing the challenges INTPs face in the academic world can go a long way in helping them make the best use of their time and experience. To help INTPs get positive results from any academic path they follow, let's explore some guidelines based on their traits.

## *How INTPs Learn*

INTPs rely heavily on logic and rational thinking. With maturity, they learn to work with relevant details while grasping the bigger picture provided simultaneously by their intuition. However until they do, young INTPs may respond to questions with the first thought that pops into their heads. It's not that they are sure of their answer. They tend to brainstorm out loud. They will update this impression later as they sort out the information a little more thoroughly, but it can be off-putting to others. Too quick of a response can be trying for a teacher interested in teaching students analytical skills in a methodical progression. However, that's all external. Inside they will not be so quickly satisfied until they have turned the material over and over in their minds, subjected it to their intuitions, and corroborated it with evidence. Unlike their initial quick response, this can take a while.

Instructors appeal to INTPs when they couch their lesson in the context of goals and challenges. INTPs love a problem that needs solving. Whether the problem is theoretical or has an immediate practical application doesn't matter – eventually INTPs will start thinking about applications anyway. Many have said that Analysts see the world as a big chessboard, and their only goal is to become chess masters. INTPs like to know the relevancy of what they are doing. They shun detail, repetition and anything that looks like “busy work”, unless they have an opportunity to simultaneously think about something more interesting.

For INTPs to learn according to their unique style, the teacher, the topic and the classroom methods need to free them to run around in their mental playgrounds. Trying to pin them down and restrict the way they organize their thoughts is counterproductive. Their imaginations and creativity need room to explore. If the curriculum is too tight and too focused, INTPs will not only be uncomfortable. They may “check out” and go through the motions just to get through it as quickly as possible.

On the other hand, if the lesson or subject seems to lack clear direction, INTPs may also balk. The savvy instructor will handle this paradox by setting the lesson parameters, discussing the objectives of the lesson, and then allowing INTPs to find their way to their own learning experience. An instructor should take care not to rob INTPs of their need to solve problems and to discover things for themselves.

Communication is an important part of INTPs' learning style. INTPs sometimes solidify their thoughts when they verbalize their thoughts or write them out. While not necessarily shy, INTPs may not be forthcoming with what is happening inside. They are private people even at a young age. The act of talking or writing about their thoughts – turning them into words - can be helpful to their style of learning. That's not to say that a teacher should force them to “perform”. They both hate the limelight and they like and need a good amount of time to deliberate before they can present confidently and more accurately. However, instructors should encourage them and give them an opportunity to share. Gently coaxing them to communicate what is on their minds can help them organize and solidify the notions that are floating around in their heads.

Sometimes when INTPs talk about their thoughts, the details can seem random and disjointed to the casual listener. Given time, INTPs will eventually come to a coherent conclusion – or six. INTPs may end

with several answers to the same question from an onslaught of varied ideas. While not having a singular conclusion may be frustrating for some, it speaks to INTPs' open-mindedness and the ability to approach a problem from many different angles. The educational programs would do well to try to harness this creativity. Instead, it can try the patience of teachers and peers, and even leave INTPs feeling a little uncomfortable when someone forces them to draw a single conclusion. With so many choices, how do you know which one is the best? Self-doubt can trouble INTPs in the classroom, especially in college, because of this. From the INTP perspective, this difficulty comes from their deep need to get it right. Even with this constant second-guessing themselves, INTPs can be fierce and self-assured when they do feel confident with their facts and ideas.

INTPs feel better dealing with the part of something once they sense they have a grasp of the whole. If assigned a paper on "chronic stress", they may feel the need to immerse themselves in psychology and neurobiology books, before they feel comfortable approaching the subject. It would not be unusual to find an INTP spending time pouring over books and journals and exploring the Internet endlessly. Of course, time constraints will make such a comprehensive survey of the topic an unrealistic goal unless it's a major paper like a master's thesis. INTPs sometimes need to avoid going so broad that they lose focus on the specifics of lesser assignments.

Finally, INTPs sometimes feel more confident pointing out what is false long before they commit to what is true in an argument or discussion. This "process of elimination" approach can appear as though the student is taking a negative approach to a topic. This would be a misinterpretation in that this focus is just another way of approaching a subject until the INTPs are sure they can speak reasonably confidently about the conclusion. It's like the old elephant joke, "How do you make a sculpture of an elephant? Get a block of marble and chip away everything that doesn't look like an elephant." This can sometimes be a more comfortable learning approach for INTPs.

## High School

**In the classroom:** INTP personality types find high achievement very intrinsically rewarding. While some may set high intellectual standards to receive recognition, INTPs set those standards for themselves alone. INTPs, especially Turbulent ones, are likely to be perfectionists and do whatever it takes to

embrace high standards, though usually standards of their own creation rather than from external demands. They dedicate great amounts of time and effort to solving complex problems or unraveling mysteries. The creator of the Rubik's Cube must have made it for Analysts. As far as earning good grades goes, this comes naturally to INTPs – although they may falter if the goals and purpose of a curriculum seem too vague or trivial. But even when they falter, with their intelligence and their work ethic, they nonetheless pull through and receive good grades even in those subjects. Their curiosity puts them well above the ordinary student when it comes to the energy they apply to studying.

Developmentally speaking, conceptualization, seeing beyond the concrete, is still a novel tool for INTPs entering high school. Like a new toy, abstract thoughts feel invigorating to young INTPs as they begin to enjoy a fuller experience within their intuitive selves. Combine this with the continued growth of their knowledge and intelligence, and they blossom into formidable students.

When they choose their courses, science, technology and the arts attract INTPs. These allow them to shine as “the seekers of solutions” and provide them with the skills they need to enjoy a sense of “wizardry” or expertise. Political science and economics may prove interesting to them for similar reasons. However, grades alone do not tell their story. INTPs tend to do well in any course they take, but the subjects may not leave them with that same sense of fulfillment.

However, even with all of their academic strengths, INTPs' high school years are not without certain challenges. All kinds of social problems that creep into the classroom may bother INTPs and disrupt their learning. INTPs' reclusive behavior, combined with their academic skill, might cause their peers to label them as “nerds” and “geeks”. This may result in bullying which can be a distraction in the classroom.

INTPs may not apply much work to certain subjects when they see how easily things come to them. They may take it for granted that they will do well and not put as much effort into acing tests and papers, especially if the subject doesn't excite them. They are typically not as bound by conventional rules and structures in their inner lives and attitudes as others. INTPs don't necessarily see this neglect as “being lazy” or not attending to their work. The bigger picture always takes priority, and the need for a clear, structured goal will always be more important. This may not be wise on their part as even the smallest details have value. Learning to be disciplined regardless of how one feels can be a needed life lesson.

Nonetheless, not applying themselves fully to all their work doesn't usually cause high school INTPs to lose any sleep at night. They will probably do just as well anyway, whether they put in the time and attention or not.

**Outside the classroom:** If you've been to high school, you don't have to watch a single one of the thousands of films about teenage angst to know that there's more to it than just classes. And most would agree that there are as many lessons in a school's yards and hallways as there are in the classroom. So, let's take a moment to consider high school as a place where some important social lessons unfold.



As mentioned above, bullying in school can be a problem for INTPs, who are different, occasionally reclusive, and smart. Combine this with their lack of interest in being popular or in playing what they would regard as the games needed for climbing the social ladder and you have the makings of an outsider. Being an outsider in high school can be difficult even if that role is self-imposed. More than likely, INTPs can be found hanging out alone or with a small group of people who are similar to themselves. This in itself can feed unpleasant and unfair stereotypes.

However, if a topic interests INTPs, they can become animated and enjoy a conversation. They often have a wry sense of humor and a "bookish" charm. This may not be universally appealing in high school but may, nonetheless, win them admirers. Ben Stein personifies this with his droll observations and intellectual thoughts which have earned him an audience over the years. Unfortunately, INTPs may have to wait for more sophisticated audiences in college before this asset pays off. Furthermore, if the conversation wanders outside of INTPs area of interest or becomes too focused on small talk, the INTPs will quickly detach. They may try to change the subject or even excuse themselves from the conversation. The problem in high school for INTPs is the trivial makes up most of cafeteria and school yard conversation. And you don't want to get on the wrong side of a debate with INTPs who feel confident

about their arguments. Their unrestrained approach can offset any points earned for prior conversational congeniality.

INTPs feel more comfortable in academic, scientific or technical extracurricular groups. It may take some encouragement to get them to join any organization at all; however, it will take a little less if the topic is right, such as clubs that involve robotics or rocketry. Any group that highlights skills and intelligence draws INTPs. Chess Club, Art Club, Latin Club, Debate Team, the Model UN... anything that challenges them and presents an interesting mental exercise is something they might join.

INTPs occasionally take leadership roles in extracurricular groups, but usually only when their expertise and problem-solving skills are required. INTPs often take on an observer's role, only becoming involved when it is obvious the group needs their skills to move forward effectively. They often wait until they see that those in charge are in over their heads. While they aren't comfortable in the limelight, their need to solve problems may supersede their hesitation to step forward and take charge.

## Work or College?

While there are many other reasons for deciding whether to go college than just personality types, they can play a role in the equation. Not long ago, most thought of college or university as the quickest path to success and security. Now some of those same people are vigorously arguing against higher education for everyone having seen college dropouts succeed on a grand scale in our technological age. Steve Jobs and Bill Gates are the two most famous examples. College is just one possible path to discovering one's niche. So, what might INTPs consider when thinking about college?

There are two questions INTPs should ask themselves when deciding whether to hit the books or enter the workforce:

- *Will a degree be necessary in the work I want to aim for?* Considering their interests, INTPs may want to earn credentials, in the form of a license or a degree. Becoming a scientist, economist, political scientist, lawyer, professor or academic researcher obviously requires some training. The most attractive careers for INTPs often need a diploma.



- *Will I be able to gain something intangible and yet valuable from going to college?* For many there is more to higher education than just getting a job. It's a life passage and an opportunity to grow and take steps toward becoming an independent young adult. There is ample opportunity at college to explore the systems, theories and models that INTPs are so fond of. The guidance and the dedicated time available at college can be helpful for young Analysts who are discovering their places in the world.

## In College

INTPs who choose to go to a college or university feel at home almost immediately - maybe not socially, but certainly academically. No matter what high school experience they had, INTPs have a real opportunity to shine when they go to college. And unlike most high schools, the right colleges can give INTPs a larger opportunity to freely exercise their powerful and creative intellects.

College is a time for INTPs to begin to consider and exploit their strengths and talents in a real way. They may find kindred spirits who they can play off of in the classroom and in study groups. They may even become dismayed when they find similar personality types in the room at the same time. Other Analysts may come to the same place for the same reason, and by choice, unlike high school. Suddenly, INTPs may not be the only Analysts in the pond nor the smartest kids in class as they may have been in high school. This could create some resentment and a competitive environment that could be new territory that may take some adjustment.

Subjects that might attract INTPs in college include science (any kind), technology (any kind), economics, political science, law, business analysis, education, and anthropology just to name a handful. INTPs do well with anything they try. However, a major that demands they arrange complex and tangled facts into something that makes sense appeals most to them. The question for INTPs is not whether they can do well with any given subject they find themselves studying – they have the fundamental intelligence and dedication to do well regardless – but rather, will they feel fulfilled?

Some feel that college or university is only about getting the tools you need to make a good living, a goal INTPs may adopt but it won't be their paramount consideration. From the list of the preferred majors

above, it's easy to see the courses which can comfortably lead to well-paying jobs. However, that is more because INTPs have unique talents that are rare enough and valuable enough to warrant large incomes. The major they choose may or may not be an effort to create financial security. Their underlying purpose in college is usually to become better problem-solvers in whatever field they aim for.

One area of difficulty for INTPs in college is the need to go to those courses nobody wants to – the foundational prerequisites. Most INTPs will “test out” of these, making them unnecessary, and they will probably make their lives easier by doing so if they have the opportunity. However, into every college career a little mundane must fall. Some needed courses are too elementary for INTPs and lack the challenge they need. They may find them dull – or worse, irrelevant. However, learning to cope with this may also be good disciplinary practice for INTPs and other Analysts. It won't be the last time they run into necessary tasks that feel meaningless and boring. While they would rather spend their time in their intellectual ivory towers, in the real productive world, the mundane constantly invades our lives. College can help those INTPs aware enough to gain a degree of tolerance for such detail and prepare them to approach the adult world in a more practical manner.

Like most young people, INTPs delight in the social autonomy that going away to college offers. For most students, this is the first significant taste of life away from their families and their families' rules. Some even choose their universities based on the distance from the family home. It's no different for INTPs, who are just as interested in coming into their own. If they had a hard time at school or at home because of their personality traits, it may be a relief to escape that. However, the “party life” will probably hold little attraction for INTPs. They put too little priority on their social lives and prefer to be on their own or with a small group of friends. INTPs usually just continue their same slightly awkward or disinterested social style into college, but on a more adult level.

However, they may make an excursion into the party life if stress from their hard work and perfectionism becomes overwhelming. INTPs, especially Turbulent ones, tend to be perfectionists and that causes them to be hard on themselves. If they start creating too much pressure in their lives, they may react by going in the opposite direction of their normally hardworking selves. Parties, alcohol, drugs and casual sex are not out of the question with such a reaction. However, a party will be a strange and untamed place for



them and their need for control, and activities with clear goals will eventually take over. More likely than not, such adventures will be no more than short-lived phases for INTPs.

For the typical INTP, university life may feel like the first step away from the “amateur league” and a step closer to being a professional player in whatever field they follow. As they advance their coursework through the undergraduate level and on into their pursuit of graduate degrees, they feel more and more like they are coming into their own. And while INTPs may never be social gadflies, those around them will likely begin to gain a respect for their abilities and their subtle charms.

## *Career and Professional Development*

Let us begin with one of the most prominent personality traits shared by all INTPs – their love for theoretical methods and ideas. The best INTP careers turn this unique trait into a major strength, as very few other personality types enjoy theories as much as INTPs do. For this particular reason, INTPs are excellent career scientists (especially in highly theoretical fields such as physics or chemistry), mathematicians, technical writers or system analysts. INTPs thrive in fields where they can combine their imagination, open-mindedness and strategic



thinking skills. They are usually fascinated by research, pattern-seeking, hypotheses, possibilities and options. More often than not, INTPs also have many grand dreams and ambitions – however, they are likely to keep them hidden, even from their inner circle.

Next, INTPs enjoy finding and analyzing underlying principles and ideas. Many typical career paths allow INTPs to utilize this trait, even though this often comes with practical applications that do not really interest INTPs. For instance, INTPs can be great corporate strategists, business analysts, video game designers, programmers or engineers (this career is particularly suitable for INTPs due to their love for theory). Regardless of the area they are working in, INTPs are system designers at heart. Nothing fascinates them more than engineering models, be they physical or intellectual – INTPs see the environment as something that can be shaped and modeled according to their ideas. People with this personality type are highly analytical, focused and intelligent, able to surpass all other personality types in terms of organizational skills and precise thinking. INTPs' quiet determination and reasoning skills give them a distinct advantage over other personality types when it comes to intellectual pursuits.

INTPs also enjoy difficult challenges and strongly detest routine, doing whatever they can to avoid or automate mind-numbing tasks. It is difficult to imagine an INTP willingly choosing a strictly administrative or teamwork-focused role.

INTPs tend to be very independent (even somewhat eccentric), hold themselves to very high standards and dislike managing other people or being managed, especially later in their career. These traits are rarely seen as attractive in the modern corporate world and INTPs should avoid mentioning them in a job interview – however, if their manager proves to be insightful and open-minded enough, the INTP will be a never tiring generator of brilliant and unique ideas. Some of the best INTP careers making good use of these traits may focus on legal, freelance consulting or forensic or laboratory research routes.

Finally, INTPs are typical “lone wolves” and typical INTP careers revolve around this trait. They live in their own minds, love solitude, need to have enough breathing space to use their creativity and dedication without being constantly questioned by other team members, and tend to despise small talk and other social necessities. INTPs do not really understand or enjoy emotional exchanges and are unlikely to spend a significant amount of time chitchatting with their colleagues or customers. For these reasons, customer-facing careers are highly unsuitable for INTPs – they would do much better in roles that focus on data and theories rather than people. For instance, INTPs may be excellent lawyers, data analysts or even journalists. As long as they find the field interesting, any of these are some of the best career choices for people with this personality type.

Unfortunately, despite being versatile and highly intelligent, INTPs are likely to face many difficulties in their careers if they choose the wrong path. People with this personality type are rare and their quiet nature does not help either – consequently, they usually have difficulty finding inspiring role models or getting good advice when it comes to career planning. Jobs that are perfectly suitable for 80%+ of the population would likely frustrate and exhaust most INTPs very quickly. So, how do you choose the right path?

## Getting on the Career Ladder

The best thing about being an INTP is that people with this personality type tend to be extremely versatile. Jacks-of-all-trades, geeks, nitpickers, walking encyclopedias – INTPs will have heard these compliments many times throughout their lives. Actually, most other personality types would not even see these sayings as compliments to begin with. Like other Analysts, INTPs are unstoppable when they get a chance to combine their knowledge with their imagination – but getting such an opportunity can be a challenge.

Whatever their hobbies or aspirations, INTPs do best in technological and scientific fields. It does not really matter whether a particular INTP wants or is able to get into a purely technological field – sometimes their chosen profession has no direct links with technology. What matters is the INTP's ability to exploit and utilize the available technological and scientific tools in a way that not only excites their imagination and gives them a chance to apply their knowledge, but also increases the efficiency of the entire system.

INTPs should embrace these strengths in the job-hunting stage as well. The bad news is that they are unlikely to do well when it comes to networking and socializing – the primary means of getting a job for many other personality types. INTPs can become better at this as time goes by, e.g. by only targeting like-minded individuals and taking time to improve their social skills – however, this is not by any means mandatory and many people with this personality type will do just fine without an extensive social network.

The good news is that Analysts know how to plan. INTPs, with their organizational skills, are quite well positioned in this respect, and this is what they should focus on – thinking about what they want to achieve in life and then working backwards, developing several possible action plans. Finding out what the first steps could be, mapping out the potential channels, crafting the introductory e-mail and presenting the arguments – these things come naturally to INTPs and they should not hesitate to focus on such strengths. Not many people have the willpower or imagination necessary to come up with a highly targeted approach – however, one good e-mail sent to the right person is often much better than 100+ random applications. That being said, INTPs often find it quite difficult to remain focused when the

task at hand is relatively mundane – people with this personality type need to make a conscious effort to find time for designing their approach.

Of course, you need to be able to present your skills in the right way in order to distinguish yourself among other candidates. As an INTP, you probably find many things interesting, maybe even seeing them as hobbies. Utilize this – think about what hobbies could be attractive in a specific field and then find a way to turn those ideas into real-life projects. There are plenty of opportunities out there – you can participate in competitions or volunteer projects, build an online presence (e.g. a small blog), or write a couple of articles and try to get them published in print media. It does not really matter what you do, as long as it is something you can put on your CV – not only will this make you a more attractive and versatile candidate, but it will also give you a lot of breathing space in an interview. Answering a question like “describe a situation where you used your problem-solving skills” is much, much easier when you have got 5+ projects listed on your CV. Be imaginative – your skills are not worth much if you are the only person who knows about them.

Finally, you need to brush up your presentation skills. If you have an interview coming up, great – but do not make the mistake of thinking that your technical knowledge and enthusiasm will put you above everybody else. No matter how cliché this sounds, you need to be aware of the most common interview techniques and questions so that you are not caught off-guard by something like “what is your biggest weakness?” – answering “perfectionism” or “I work too hard” is not going to result in bonus points, quite the contrary. Try to highlight your achievements and knowledge, but also be prepared to get many template questions, especially in early stages. In some cases, the recruiter will not know much about the role and will simply be going through a checklist – expect that and do not let your confidence cloud your judgment when it comes to preparation. INTPs tend to be very good candidates, but they usually find it difficult to get that message across and may consequently lose out to less qualified but better prepared opponents.

Thanks to their intellect and imagination, INTPs rarely have major difficulties when it comes to landing their first job. However, it is also important to always keep everything in perspective. People with this personality type often say that they studied hard in school, with their eyes fixed on getting a position in

a specific field – but then regretted missing a chance during their school years to develop personal relationships that could have helped them a lot. Having a social support network, no matter how small, would be of great help in many difficult situations.

You should also never forget to listen to yourself, especially when deciding what would be a good career choice. INTPs are good at self-reflection, but this trait is often clouded by other factors, such as outside influences and financial rewards. In the end, you are the only one who knows what is going to make you truly happy. This does not mean that you should have unrealistic expectations at the start of your career – entry-level jobs are rarely interesting or satisfying – but it is your responsibility to find the right career path. Do not choose a profession just because it pays well or is seen as prestigious. Other personality types may get away with it, but as an INTP, you will always know that you are in the wrong place and that feeling will not be quelled by materialistic or social arguments.

## Professional Development

Let us take a look at what makes INTPs good at what they do, and then move on to discussing what traits are behind most of their problems.

INTPs often say that the best thing about their job, whatever it may be, is using creativity to find and solve problems related to various systemic issues. In other words, people with this personality type tend to be less interested in why entry #319 in the accounting journal contains incorrect information; they ask why the system is not good enough to pick this up automatically. INTPs are the ultimate architects and organizers, and this is not some kind of a feel-good overstatement. Some personality types (Diplomats) are great at being empathic, which wins them many friends in the workplace. Others (Explorers) excel at living in the present moment, being unbeatable in rapidly changing situations. And some (Sentinels) are bastions of stability and care, putting authority and rules above everything else – the safe keepers of balance books and procedure documents. However, none of these types come close to Analysts, and INTPs in particular, when it becomes necessary to devise a system, to bring many moving parts together, and manage the giant chessboard of opportunities, threats and goals. INTPs' abstract and rational thinking skills are unmatched in those situations. Your mind is both your greatest gift and your greatest curse – if the environment is right, you will quickly be noticed and appreciated; if it is not, you will be

frustrated by all the inefficiencies that you would like to fix and all the problems that you would like to solve. INTPs tend to have many transferable skills, so do not be hesitant to promote them and look for greener pastures if a specific role is not a good match for you and it is not a life-or-death situation (it rarely is).

INTPs are also good at absorbing new knowledge, especially of a technical nature. You are probably already aware of this particular trait, as it becomes clearly visible in school, especially in the later years. Try to use every opportunity you get to learn and experiment with something new, if possible. For instance, many organizations offer various training programs or subscriptions to professional magazines – there is always something else that you can learn. Use that mind of yours the best you can – even if a particular piece of information does not offer any immediate benefits, it is very likely it will prove useful at some point. You never know when someone will come in and ask if there is a person in the office who has an idea of how a certain computer program works or how they should approach a specific project. Life is full of opportunities and INTPs have a major advantage over other personality types when it comes to retaining and categorizing knowledge in their memory. Remember that regardless of what you are doing, you are constantly gaining experience and perspective – and that knowledge is not going to disappear.

Tangentially, it is also worth mentioning that this particular strength can be very useful when it comes to educational qualifications. Regardless of whether you are employed or not at a given time, you may want to consider exploring fields and subjects loosely connected to your main specialization. There are plenty of areas that reward INTPs' strategic thinking and ability to design and work with systems, whatever they may be – keeping your eyes open can sometimes yield great results. Few INTPs can say that they are always satisfied with their roles, so if you are not among the lucky few, trying out a new subject can easily open new horizons and boost your self-confidence as well. You do not necessarily have to get formal qualifications – nowadays, studying independently is easier than ever. Your mind will always be hungry for new knowledge, so why not keep it occupied with meaningful studies as opposed to something that has no lasting value.



If you have an opportunity, you should also try finding a hobby that you could potentially turn into a source of income later on – this approach is quite common among INTPs, especially those in well-paid but not very intellectually challenging positions. The actual earnings do not really matter that much in the beginning – what matters is the chance to do something that truly excites and inspires you, without the constraints of the employer-employee relationship. If you create value – and it is hard not to, if you are truly enjoying what you are doing – other people will quickly notice it and reward you accordingly. This would also tick another very important box in the INTP’s happiness checklist – the desire for independence. It could be anything – a website about your favorite computer game, a local neighborhood initiative, or a small consulting company. Some INTPs want to change the world in some way; others focus on local or personal matters. The main principle is that you should try to do what you truly enjoy, while retaining the safety net of regular employment – and who knows, maybe your idea will be the next “big thing”. If you are also in a position where you can divert some financial resources to your hobby, then all the better. INTPs tend to be excellent strategists, so you should not have any difficulties managing this parallel “career”.

Remember when we mentioned that your mind is both a gift and a curse at the same time? Here is another thing to consider, building upon the ideas discussed in the previous paragraph – you are bound to overthink things and get bogged down on trying to determine which path is best for you. Try to find time to think and reflect, but do not obsess over details – ironically, INTPs are usually at their best when they are truly relaxed and confident in their skills. If there is one thing you take away from this section, let it be this – it does not really matter which path you are going to take, if there is something about it that you know will keep you going. That path will always be the right one. As an INTP, you are highly likely to be more knowledgeable and resourceful than the majority of the population – you will be fine. Even if you do not know something, your Intuitive trait will allow you to improvise and your Thinking trait will keep you on the rational path. Think about what you truly are and what you want to achieve in life – and be confident that your skills and knowledge will take you far. Consider self-employment as an example – there are many failed businessmen, but try asking any one of them if they have ever regretted trying. You will be surprised.



Let us go back to the world of offices and cubicles for a moment. Another big problem for most INTPs is going to be personal relationships – people with this personality type rarely care about making friends in the office. Such an attitude is not really surprising – after all, this is their *modus operandi* in many other areas of their life. However, difficulties in developing casual relationships at work can stifle professional development and result in missed opportunities, both personal and professional. It is important to keep your mind open and not cringe at the thought of getting to know your colleagues better – or at least not actively avoid them.

We are stressing this not only because having connections *will* help you advance your career, regardless of how competent you are – but also because you may find that you actually enjoy being seen as an authority figure. INTPs are unlikely to be willing to step into a leadership role, but that does not mean they would not be brilliant subject matter experts. And the best part about this is that you would not need to compromise your integrity in order to be able to influence others. All you need to do is make an effort to establish a connection and some level of mutual trust with someone, and they will then spread the word. If you are in a role that is a good match for your personality traits (e.g. requires technical and strategic thinking), you will probably notice at some point that most of your non-INTP colleagues will share a certain sense of both curiosity and respect when it comes to dealing with you.

In all likelihood, you will only be satisfied with your career path if you feel confident that it gives you enough intellectual stimulation. INTPs are relatively relaxed when it comes to setting goals for themselves, but their thirst for knowledge, regardless of its nature, is unquenchable. Consequently, following a career path that is not really challenging or interesting for you is likely to make you restless and frustrated. Unlike some other personality types, INTPs never actually satisfy their curiosity, always looking for new puzzles and refusing to accept unsatisfying answers. Ultimately, everything depends on how flexible your chosen organization is – there are few career paths that are unsuitable for INTPs, but there are plenty of roles in which your primary skills will be underutilized. So explore, learn and try to find a way to use your strategic thinking skills in that specific field – and do not ever think that the gnawing feeling that you are in the wrong place will pass, if all rational arguments point to the fact that a particular role is unsuitable for you. Neither money nor stability will satisfy you in such a case. INTPs

aspire to be wizards – of science, of technology, of nature – seeking to understand and control the unknown and the mysterious. Stability, sensuality or empathy are not their domains.

There are two more things worth mentioning in this section. The first is that INTPs do not fare well in situations where they need to do unfamiliar work under time pressures. People with this personality type are decisive and able to keep a cool head in critical situations, but they feel far more comfortable when they have enough time to assess the situation and make an informed decision. INTPs have an excellent set of coping skills lurking beneath the surface, but being in “emergency mode” can exhaust them very quickly. Unlike Explorers, Analysts in general are more suited to be planners than frontline executors.

Second, it is important not to underestimate the importance of what is generally called “people skills”. We have touched this topic before, but it bears repeating – social intelligence is just as important, if not more so, than everything else. Many INTPs dismiss this idea, seeing little value in things like small talk and socializing – but they also miss the bigger picture. One of the most often repeated complaints is that many people are complacent, easily intimidated and egoistic creatures of habit. It is not a surprise that being as knowledge-focused as they are, INTPs are often disappointed by the shallowness and passivity of some people they come in contact with – however, this does not mean that there is no point in learning more about what drives and motivates other members of society. You do not necessarily have to enjoy it or seek deeper meaning in such exercises, but having these skills can give you a tremendous advantage both at work and elsewhere. Sometimes defusing a difficult stakeholder can get you much further than building a system that is twice as efficient as the old one.

## Communication between Types

It's useful to have something in common when you begin to talk with someone. It can make the rest of the conversation much more productive if you start with a resounding “yes” rather than a stubborn “no”. This section will cover four possible pairings of type groups, including brief overviews of potential synergies and obstacles, as well as some tips that may help you navigate these tricky waters.



### *Analyst – Analyst Communication*

#### *COMMON GROUND*

Obviously, two Analysts tend to find themselves “speaking the same language”. They both make rational arguments and remain theoretical. While facts must play a role when they talk to each other, those will be secondary to the larger ideas.

As puzzle-solvers, Analysts explore systems and concepts, engaging in “what if” discussions with each other. They share their tendency to improve any system or enterprise they come across. Two people with the Analyst’s perspective can be a perfect match for bouncing ideas off each other or for brainstorming. Two original thinkers, in collaboration and when they agree, can be a powerful thing. More than likely, brainstorming between Analysts will be a series of discussions over a long period of time as each will want time to ponder the different facets of an idea.

When sharing the Turbulent trait, both parties also value perfectionism and insist on it with each other. While this can seem demanding to many, two Analysts easily agree that excellence is a worthy goal. (However, they may not always agree on how to define “perfect”.)

Two Analysts quickly agree when there are inconsistencies in a business or venture. They are both likely to notice the flaws of either a company or its leadership and may form a casual alliance around such matters. While Analysts are impatient with others who make emotional or ideological arguments, this is

much less likely to happen between two Analysts. They share the same contempt for “soft” rationalizations.

Conversations between the two are often lofty, as small talk interests neither of them. In fact, they may find each other a relief from the tedium they experience at the water cooler with other types. They both show an interest in work that has a strong purpose and relevance and are prone to be visionaries, and Analysts are likely to connect well on this level.

### *POTENTIAL PROBLEMS*

One of the biggest potential problems occurring with two Analysts communicating is competition. Analysts are rare enough that they may not be used to another Analyst in the room, especially one that shares their specific interest. In high school, they were likely unique in their classrooms. University was a shock when they found themselves with other like-minded Analysts. When they enter a career, the competition with any other Analysts could be full on, especially for those drawn to leadership positions. While not prone to drama in an emotional sense, they are stubborn enough to cause workplace turmoil nonetheless. Competition could lead to demanding their way.

Analysts are open-minded and easily accept ideas from others as long as they feel those expressing the ideas are competent. However, should they sense incompetence, they can be harsh in their assessment of not only an idea, but also the person sharing it. They often show scorn when people make mistakes or display flawed logic. Analyst character Sheldon Cooper from “The Big Bang Theory” is an often mentioned archetype for this attitude. And just like his Analyst friends on the program are not immune to his judgmental inclinations, neither are other Analysts in the workplace immune to similarly harsh criticism. If they miss a beat, their fellow Analyst will call them on it, and perhaps not in the most pleasant manner. While maybe not a dominant feature, Analysts have feelings as well.

Two Analysts can also find themselves in a quagmire of genius if they produce too many great ideas while brainstorming together. They may become trapped in their own cleverness, as each new idea requires new resources and comes with opportunity costs. At some point, they may need to pull in a Sentinel or an Explorer to start weeding out what can’t be carried and to harness the brainstorming frenzy. Mentors have taught writers for years to “Murder their darlings”, meaning get rid of the lines

and ideas that are favorites but don't lend to the story. Analysts, at times, may need to kill their darling ideas for the practical good of a business. Analysts can be stubborn if they sell themselves on their own concepts. Two or more together may be nearly unmovable.

#### *TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING*

- You can be comfortable asking “why” and sharing your own observations with another Analyst.
- Give other Analysts space to process material on their own. Don't be quick to insist on a conclusion to material the other Analyst has not had time to mull over.
- Be aware of any competitive urges that may get in the way of honest and full communication.
- Just because they are also Analysts doesn't mean they agree with you or that their assessment will always be perfect. Be prepared to display some patience and allow them to prove (or fail to prove) their points in their own time and in their own way.
- Enjoy the productive debate. Most Analysts like intellectual sparring and what better partner than another Analyst? Other types may be too sensitive or set in their opinions. Regard other Analysts as opportunities. They are probably looking for the same. Most Analysts love a challenge to their ideas. Just be careful not to waste too much time at work on the theoretical jousting.
- The Introverted types within the Analyst group may need some encouragement to share ideas even with other Analysts. Encourage them to do so while not demanding it.

#### *Analyst – Diplomat Communication*

##### *COMMON GROUND*

Neither Analysts nor Diplomats like many details, both preferring to deal with the “big picture” instead. Both can absorb knowledge almost subconsciously like sponges and then incorporate it into a larger constellation of intuitive understanding. They are both imaginative and creative as they connect the dots, often in deep ways. This likeness of styles and love for the more abstract should give them plenty of common ground and opportunities to combine their talents.

### *HOW THEY COMPLEMENT ONE ANOTHER*

Diplomats live in a world of values and empathy. Analysts are more comfortable with systems and puzzles. Diplomats add to Analysts' offerings by bringing humanity to their systems. An Analyst working even with a human system like, for example, psychoanalysis likely allows efficiency to trump empathy every time. A Diplomat can typically provide "soul" to any system that Analysts devise or innovate.

On the other hand, an organization which is only about love, peace and harmony can get a little mushy around the edges. Rational analysis of an organization is an important ingredient needed for it to grow and prosper. This is where Analysts contribute.

Diplomats and Analysts both like to work with ideas. Their imaginations manipulate these ideas into models. They differ in that Diplomats create ideal designs for a perfect society (or the perfect workforce) and Analysts create ideal schemes for a perfect system. Simply put, Analysts show interest in things while Diplomats show interest in people. While their targets are different, if they can recognize and accept the other's focus while being able to freely share their own contributions to an organization, they may get along well.

### *POTENTIAL PROBLEMS*

While Analysts and Diplomats can certainly use their different focus in complementary ways, this same focus can create points of contention. An Analyst may be critical of a Diplomat's point of view and consider it too soft while a Diplomat may regard an Analyst's point of view as without concern for higher values.

As an illustration, let's suppose we have a Diplomat and Analyst trying to decide about an action in a wildlife organization. As a solution to overpopulation, an Analyst might consider thinning a wildebeest population through hunting. Overpopulation of any one species wreaks havoc in an ecosystem. A Diplomat, on the other hand, may value all life as sacred and be reluctant to release hunters on the wildebeest, instead proposing trapping and relocation efforts, redistributing the population without harming the wildebeest themselves. The conflict between efficiency and empathy is obvious, but is either

wrong? While you have limited resources to preserve balance in a wildlife community, you don't necessarily want to be inhumane about it.

Analysts and Diplomats working together spend a significant amount of time debating these different approaches in the workplace, though usually in less dramatic ways. An Analyst manager might argue that it would be more efficient to replace the receptionist at the front desk with a touch screen computer. Computers are cheaper than a continuing salaried employee and can do essentially the same job. A Diplomat manager in the same office will wonder about the welfare of the current receptionist and the lack of human warmth involved in greeting a visitor with a machine. One would highlight the time and money saved while the other would bemoan the sterile approach and the disregard for the employee. It may take some negotiating to resolve such a difference. However, it's hard to say that either perspective is invalid.

Analysts can be brusque and impatient with people who don't see things their way. Diplomats can feel frustrated and disappointed for the same reason. The Diplomats' aversion to conflict may cause them to disengage if Analysts come on too strong and if they appear too condescending. However, they might not let it go if they see the Analyst's attitude as an "injustice". If both are aware of these sensitivities, it can go a long way to maintaining harmony in the workplace.

#### *TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING*

##### **Advice for Analysts concerning Diplomats:**

- If you want an honest response, ask Diplomats questions that combine both "who" and "why" inquiries.
- Try to discover what values are important to the Diplomat. When you discover this, you'll discover what motivates them and that can be helpful in communicating with them.
- Be aware that Diplomats can be acutely sensitive to criticism or harsh words. This can shut them down, at least temporarily.
- Try to compliment or show appreciation, at least occasionally, to Diplomats with whom you work. They respond well to positive regard.



**Advice for Diplomats concerning Analysts:**

- If you want a heartfelt response, ask Analysts questions that begin with “why”. Be willing to explore their view of your organization and what they think it will take to make it run well.
- If you find that you are having trouble communicating with Analysts, don’t be afraid to ask them why they think that’s the case. They most likely won’t be offended and will probably take some time to dissect the interpersonal dynamic between the two of you. It may give you clues as to how to approach them in the future.
- As intelligent as Analysts often are, they are also notorious for lacking *emotional* intelligence. Be aware of this and try not to take any unfriendly responses or comments too seriously or personally.

*Analyst – Sentinel Communication**COMMON GROUND*

While they can be complementary (see below), Sentinels and Analysts have few things in common. If there’s anything at all, perhaps it’s their shared need for efficiency. Analysts work with broad systems, trying to get them to run smoothly. Sentinels do the same with more practical matters.

*HOW THEY COMPLEMENT ONE ANOTHER*

Sentinels bring order to an organization and seek to perform practical tasks. Analysts gain knowledge and assemble the building blocks of a system in their minds and on paper. Each plays a different role when they have a job that suits them. Analysts are visionaries while Sentinels efficiently attend to business in the here and now. Analysts often ask “what if” and “why” while Sentinels are more likely to ask “how” and expect a tangible answer.

So how do these two different types work with each other and communicate successfully? Analysts sincerely need someone to carry out their vision. They are masters at manipulating ideas but need someone else around to turn their ideas into something practical. Sentinels are great at getting things done. In many ways, that’s a perfect match.

A good fictional model might be the visionary CEO with the practical administrative assistant. Think Tony Stark (Robert Downey, Jr.) and Pepper Potts (Gwyneth Paltrow) as comic book caricatures of this in the Iron Man movies. While he busies himself designing his technologies, she keeps Stark Industries running. From such examples, one might easily think the Sentinel is always subordinate to the visionary Analyst. However, if you consider an Analyst in a research position with a Sentinel boss, you have the opposite power relationship. Yet they complement each other's roles just the same.

By clearly understanding and accepting one another's roles and communicating from their positions of strength, each type can become invaluable to the other. Analysts and Sentinels can create a mutually useful and enviably productive partnership in the workplace.

### *POTENTIAL PROBLEMS*

There's an old saying: "Nobody likes change except a wet baby." Whole industries have grown up around "change management". But it's not entirely true – Intuitive types like Analysts and Diplomats love change. They always look for ideas that improve things. On some level, these types crave it as it represents growth and possibilities to them.

On the other hand, Sentinels focus more on doing the right thing according to proven standards and traditions. With Sentinels, making the status quo work is a priority. Analysts have little regard for the status quo, especially if it gets in the way of improving a system. Sentinels may insist on doing it the "right" way according to how it's always been done. Meanwhile, Analysts may insist on doing it a "better" way regardless of how it's always been done.

The universal conflict between those trying to preserve a system and those trying to change it is perhaps as old as humanity itself, and is certainly an area that can be difficult in the workplace. This can play out as passive-aggressive resistance or discounting the importance of one another's contributions to an organization. These two diverse approaches may need careful communication, reassurance and much understanding.

Analysts' social style can lack warmth and consideration for the emotional needs of others. Sentinels are nurturers and preservers who can be warm with their co-workers. While they can be rigidly efficient to

the point of being controlling sometimes, they keep the welfare of others in mind and they can be extremely loyal.

Sentinels would do well not to take an Analyst's criticisms too personally whether it's directed at themselves or others. Analysts would do well to understand that Sentinels may react badly to harsh comments and off-the-cuff negative feedback. Since they are so invested in things running well, Sentinels sometimes take criticism towards an organization or others very personally.

#### *TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING*

##### **Advice for Analysts concerning Sentinels:**

- Make an effort to show appreciation for what Sentinels do. They don't necessarily seek gratitude from others, but they become energized when they get it.
- Talk to Sentinels about any changes to a system. Understand that their first impulse is to preserve the status quo. Change may feel like something is out of control for them.
- Avoid unproductive criticism of others when speaking with Sentinels.
- Talk about practical tasks rather than theories if you want to connect with a Sentinel.

##### **Advice for Sentinels concerning Analysts:**

- Understand that Analyst co-workers benefit from your attention to detail even if they don't always recognize or seem to appreciate it.
- Try not to take any criticism or harsh comments from an Analyst personally.
- Don't load Analysts down with too many details that aren't necessary. They may show little interest, and they may not even respond to such information.

#### *Analyst – Explorer Communication*

##### *COMMON GROUND*

Explorers and Analysts both like to search for answers, although their style and scope of doing so is different (discussed below). However, if they recognize that they are both looking for a better and more efficient way, it can make discussions more productive. If they can grasp that and can tolerate their

different approaches, they may find that their motives are alike enough. Bonding by using the things we have in common while learning the value of our differences can go a long way in a business relationship.

#### *HOW THEY COMPLEMENT ONE ANOTHER*

While Analysts want to play with ideas and systems, Explorers would rather solve problems in a hands-on fashion. Analysts may not act until they see their ideas to the end, while it can be hard to get Explorers to wait long enough to check with others before they carry out theirs. Explorers work with the here and now and the practical while Analysts work with overarching systems that are more conceptual than tangible. If a real problem needs to be solved, there is nobody better than an Explorer. If a system needs to be understood, deconstructed or rebuilt on paper, there is nobody better than an Analyst.

When Analysts and Explorers work together, they need to understand that they are each part of a two-step process. Explorers can put together the pieces needed to make the Analysts' models work. Analysts are notoriously weak at implementation, whereas Explorers are strong. However, Explorers sometimes don't pay enough attention to the big picture as they focus in on the details. This can put them out of sync with the vision of an organization's management and perhaps into hot water. As long as each realizes they both have good things to stir into the same pot, Explorers and Analysts can create a powerful working relationship.

Consider the metaphor of Apollo 13, the movie and the real life event that brought us the iconic phrase "Houston, we have a problem". After a mechanical mishap, three U.S. astronauts were in danger of not making it back to Earth alive in their crippled space capsule. The Analysts can be compared to ground control in Houston who calculated all the numbers and worked out a trajectory. They created a system to get the astronauts home.

However, the Explorers / astronauts were the problem solvers. They did the hands-on work and figured out the details that brought about the swing around the moon which eventually got the capsule home. Communication between ground control and the astronauts was vital to the success of the rescue. This illustrates how the different functions and styles can work together to fulfill the same goal.

### *POTENTIAL PROBLEMS*

An Analyst may become annoyed by Explorers' focus on details while an Explorer may feel that Analysts' ideas are too vague and impractical. It can be tempting for Explorers to dismiss Analysts as having their heads in the clouds and not understanding the practical side of anything. On the other hand, Analysts may return the judgment by declaring that Explorers are reckless, have no vision and think too narrowly about things. When either or both refuses to see the value of the other's style, communication is likely to shut down.

Analysts can be condescending if they don't feel someone can play skillfully in their playground of lofty notions and complex systems. They may wrongly react to Explorers' focus on detail and simply write them off as uninspired. Meanwhile Explorers are just as likely to ignore Analysts' "nonsense" as they go ahead and complete their revered solutions. The result is that they aren't talking to each other, a pitfall that these co-workers should avoid.

### *TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING*

#### **Advice for Analysts concerning Explorers:**

- Explorers become bored with topics that are too abstract and theoretical. Don't spend too much time there when speaking with them. Share a quick overview of your ideas and add the facts you know. Then give them the space they need to create a workable implementation. They might surprise you and bring your ideas to life in exciting ways.
- Genius comes in many forms. Keep in mind Explorers often have a different kind of intelligence that relies on details and mastery. While it may be tedious to you, vital results often hinge on their attention to the finer points. Be patient and don't try to force them to work in ways that are foreign to them. Respect their style and allow it to work, just as you expect them to respect yours.
- Approach Explorers with "how" questions if you want an honest response.

#### **Advice for Explorers concerning Analysts:**

- Analysts become bored with too many details. They don't need to line up all the facts like you do. Talk to them about how you think your ideas will affect the larger organization or system.

Ask them to give you feedback from that perspective. Such a vantage point can save you from going in the wrong direction – one that you might not even be aware you’re going in. The “long-range view” is often your blind spot, and Analysts can help you with that.

- Don’t be too quick to dismiss Analysts and their theories. They want an efficient outcome just like you. Try to find common ground here, even if the point of doing so isn’t immediately clear. You might be surprised how helpful it can be in the long run.
- Approach Analysts with “why” questions if you want a heartfelt response.

## Career Progression

You got that job, settled in and have been an exemplary employee ever since. What now? How can INTPs progress in their careers and what difficulties are they likely to have?

Answers to these questions depend heavily on the field that the INTP is in. People with this personality type tend to do better in non-managerial roles, becoming knowledgeable and respected subject matter experts rather than senior managers with dozens of subordinates. Many companies have recognized that there are two distinct career progression paths and come up with ways to retain and promote personnel who are not really interested in managerial roles. Large corporations and science/technology companies are naturally better at this, so if you are able to get a job there, it is likely that you will be able to secure promotions without being burdened with supervisory tasks.

However, it is also often possible to progress in a field where achievements are measured by the number of people reporting to you. INTPs, like other Analysts, are very good when it comes to mapping out and organizing processes and systems, and it is nearly inevitable that someone with this personality type will come up with ideas and suggestions aimed at improving the efficiency of the business model. Furthermore, their natural curiosity (some might call it nosiness) leads to INTPs having fingers in many pies and indirectly influencing activities not related to their specific role.

This is one way of being recognized and promoted – as the INTP gets a better understanding of how the company operates, they can grow their responsibilities without overburdening themselves. This would increase their job security and future prospects as well. However, getting appropriate financial rewards

can be a challenge in such situations – many managers are understandably reluctant to grant (or try to justify) a raise without any additional managerial responsibilities, not even talking about situations where raising the INTP's salary would mean that it would reach or surpass the manager's own.

It is also important to remember that a better position does not necessarily come with more freedom. If anything, it can mean more red tape and more supervision. INTPs excel in roles where they are able to design systems and come up with solutions that help them increase the efficiency and value of some kind of output. Ironically, getting promoted can often hinder rather than ease such efforts – sometimes, you may be better off staying in the same role for longer, using the time to learn something new and then looking for a better paid job at a different company. Traditional promotion paths and corporate jockeying are not made for INTPs.

It is also important to remember that there may be times when getting a promotion is simply unrealistic, either because of an organizational culture that sees little value in the skills that the INTP can offer, or simply because of the lack of room for growth. Here are some ideas of what INTPs could do – changing the employer is an obvious option, but is it the only one?

## Alternative Options

However radical this may seem, you do not need to be employed to live comfortably. We live in an age of possibilities, and selling your time to a corporation is not the only way to generate income. INTPs are imaginative, bold individuals, and their ability to make connections between seemingly unrelated things and ideas can be very valuable. So why not try putting some of those ideas into practice and turning them into your own business?

Many people find the notion of self-employment quite scary – however, the times when someone could spend 20+ years working at the same company and not worry about the future are over. Job security and guaranteed prospects are a thing of the past, with the exception of several fields such as military or medicine. Consequently, working for yourself may actually be a more secure and viable option, which also comes with a range of other benefits such as the ability to plan your time, see the tangible results of



your work and, obviously, to be your own boss. INTPs value freedom and independence, and being self-employed would give them an excellent opportunity to enjoy these things.

Furthermore, self-employment solves one of the major hurdles that INTPs are likely to encounter in the corporate environment – forced interaction with other people. As a self-employed individual, you are free to choose which tasks you want to perform and which ones you want to delegate or outsource – no more following orders, doing tedious administrative work or dealing with people who are unable or unwilling to improve. Self-employment offers many major benefits to INTPs, especially in today's global and always-connected environment, and people with this personality type are highly likely to be successful in this area.

However, there is no point in trying to start a business without a good idea. This is where the INTPs' ability to come up with unusual connections starts to shine. Anyone could think of a product that could be shipped from the East and sold in the West – but it takes a very imaginative mind to come up with an idea, product or solution that could grow into an innovative business venture. After all, there is a reason why Google and Facebook were developed by geeks in their basements and dorm rooms rather than engineers working 9-5 at multinational companies. Think of an interesting way to fulfill an existing need (or create one) and do not be afraid to experiment. INTPs can be excellent entrepreneurs, having both the imagination necessary to develop a good business model, and the willpower to keep going in difficult times.

## Suitable Careers

Let's look at some specific jobs that INTPs may find fit them the best. We do not try to offer a full list of professions. That would be impossible and the list would grow daily. Rather, we offer a sampling of jobs that are consistent with INTPs' personality traits, with added explanations of why they fit. Use this to create guidelines when thinking about your own career goals.

For those of you already employed, this may serve as a confirmation or an explanation for why you might be happy or unhappy with where you are. We do not presume this to be a firm prescription of

what you must do to be successful or happy. Rather, we hope it will provide you with some insight as you make your personal decisions.

Below, each category represents a strength of the INTP personality type, and a series of careers that capitalize most fully on that strength. Whether business strategy or intelligent engineering is any given INTP's preferred route makes a big difference in job satisfaction, so we've separated these career opportunities into broad but uniquely appropriate interests.

### **Engineering and Design**

Engineering and design are broad categories for disciplines that use science, math, design techniques and ingenuity to create a machine, structure or system. They create new products, remove flaws from old ones, and find new uses for everything in between.

People with this personality type are very inventive and will strive to develop original ideas with an enthusiasm and skill perhaps unmatched by any other type. Most engineers and designers labor alone over a drafting table, a computer or a work bench a good deal of the time, and this will satisfy the INTPs' "lone wolf" natures. Some jobs that might appeal them include:

- Computer Engineer
- Mechanical, Electrical, or any other type of Engineer
- Architect
- Inventor
- Environmental Planner
- Urban Planner
- Software or System Designer

These roles can be extremely challenging, but conquering such challenges is what INTPs live for.

### **Research / Science**

INTPs are passionate in their need to discover how everything works. Not only do they love the discovery, but they are fond of the patterns that often reveal themselves in research. They take the

initiative to explore that which no one has explored before or to find a different approach to old disciplines.

Some of the jobs in this category include:

- Academic Researcher / Professor
- Physical Scientist
- Life Scientist
- Astronomer
- Medical Researcher
- Physicist
- Psychological Researcher
- Chemist

INTP researchers and scientists admire others with similar drive and abilities and can collaborate if they feel they are dealing with equals. Otherwise, they may be better off working on their own due to the potential personality conflicts noted above. Fortunately, a science or research position does not usually require much social connection.

## Medicine

In the medical field, INTPs make thorough diagnosticians and practitioners. What they may lack in bedside manner, they make up for in competency. Their Intuitive and Thinking traits allow INTP physicians to quickly assess a constellation of symptoms and to draw an accurate diagnosis. The process of choosing an effective treatment gets the same approach. They may also be inclined to try innovative measures when possible should the traditional treatments fail. Any of the following fields are full of potential medical puzzles to solve and would be satisfying to INTPs who are so inclined.

- Psychiatrist
- Pathologist
- Neurologist
- Pharmacologist

- Cardiologist

While these roles may require more social interaction than many research positions, INTPs do enjoy pooling their mental resources, brainstorming viable approaches with people who share their dedication and intellect, something they have ample opportunity to do in fields of specialized medicine.

## Strategy

It's no accident that we call those with the INTP personality type Analysts. INTPs explore systems by mentally taking them apart, learning all they contain and then rebuilding them in a more useful way, adding and subtracting material as necessary. Calling this section "Strategy" is cheating a little bit. Everything INTPs do is strategic in some fashion, but not all strategic jobs neatly fit into categories. So this section serves as a catch-all.

- Business or Corporate Strategist
- Management Consultant
- Project Manager
- Military Officer
- Educational Consultant
- Investment Analyst
- Lawyer
- Security and Intelligence
- Anything involving analysis and forecasting

What do these jobs have in common? They all have the potential for presenting far-reaching problems that need solving and a need for developing strategies – what INTPs do best.

## What Makes Jobs Unsuitable for INTPs?

In modern society, we not only spend a great deal of time at work, but we also tend to need our work to give us meaning. We must be careful not to get stuck in a situation that doesn't suit us, as it can cause us

to risk all manner of difficulties. Following are some characteristics of the types of jobs that may not be suitable for INTPs:

### **Restrictive Environment**

INTPs like to experiment and to explore new ideas. If the structures and rules of a workplace are too rigid, INTPs usually feel stifled and unfulfilled. They are passionate puzzle-solvers and are not happy when restrictions keep them from exercising this passion. INTPs are unlikely to be able to function at their highest capacity in such an environment.

Too many standards and too much oversight make INTPs' focus too narrow for the way they process information and gain insights. People with this personality type need mental room to "play". To function at their fullest, INTPs need independence, not supervision. They may also reject feeling locked into a career path that seems to be "pre-set". They are typically happy just doing the work they are passionate about – office politics are annoying to them.

Some examples of careers INTPs may find unsuitable for these reasons include:

- Administrative Assistant
- Soldier
- Accountant
- Regulations Enforcer
- Judge

### **Work That is Too Dependent on Face Time**

INTPs tend to do much better working alone. First, they often feel others get in their way. They sometimes see people as obstacles and distractions. Second, they are not comfortable around emotional displays and where there are humans, you inevitably get drama and emotions. They may temporarily lose their bearings in such situations. And like any Introverted type, working with others for too long will just exhaust INTPs.

Some examples of likely unsuitable careers in this category include:

- Fashion Designer
- Tour Guide
- Retail Sales Clerk
- Politician
- Street Performer

## Workplace Habits

Most of us will spend a huge percentage of our life at work. This is why we believe that discussing how different personality types behave in the workplace is important. What drives them or makes them miserable? How can you create a mutually beneficial and productive relationship with a specific personality type? How should you handle conflicts with them? Different positions create different perspectives, and how you interact with the INTP personality in the workplace should reflect this - what works best with a subordinate or colleague may backfire in the presence of a manager.

### *Colleagues*

- Insightful and unbiased – INTPs stay out of gossip, but are able to decipher underlying motives quite easily
- Reluctant to mingle and chat, but enjoy discussing new theoretical ideas with co-workers they consider equal to themselves
- Cautious and suspicious of other people's motives
- Prefer working alone and dislike sharing ideas with “untested” colleagues
- Very uncomfortable with expressing emotions or being around people who are expressing them – INTPs do not really know what they are supposed to do in such situations
- Enjoy solving riddles and noticing patterns

### *Managers*

- Have very high standards, especially for themselves
- Dislike explaining their ideas and expect subordinates to be as insightful as they are
- Very tolerant and flexible

- Open to suggestions, as long as they are logical
- Secretly dislike managing other people
- Easily notice discrepancies
- Loathe schmoozing and strongly resist all forms of emotional manipulation

### *Subordinates*

- Very innovative, original and resourceful, but demand a lot of freedom in return
- Do not care much about being liked and are less concerned about job security compared to other personality types – these notions do not hold much value to INTPs
- Dislike routine work and implementation of ideas – would much rather focus their energy on generating new ideas
- Need to be accompanied by an “implementer” (preferably someone with an S personality type) who could put their ideas into practice, but this may take time and clever management – such things cannot be forced on an INTP
- Tolerant of criticism, but will not understand emotional arguments
- Typical “lone wolves” – INTPs function best when they are left alone

## What Do Other INTPs Say?

It is one thing to read the description of your type – it is quite another to get tips and advice from fellow INTPs. This is what other INTPs say about their chosen career paths:

*“I work as a Naval Architect, in Marine Engineering / Navy Support. I began my career as a physicist but found it too slow, too limited to particular branches and fields. Went back to school and switched into the most challenging systems engineering career I could find. My advice? Find something that has flexible, multi-faceted opportunities – boredom and repetitiveness will not suit you well.”*

*“I am in the Accounting / Auditing field. I like auditing, as it allows me to have a big picture of an organization and come up with creative solutions. Accounting is mostly detailed work of repetitive nature, and as such is not the best fit. If you are just about to start looking for your first job, look for*



*something that merges science and business or social projects, as well as offers intellectual stimulation and a chance to make a difference.”*

*“I work in IT. I have really enjoyed being an internal consultant, working on different projects as an advisor / solutions designer. I used to be a programmer but I left that 12+ years ago and until recently (when I changed jobs) I had a team to do that for me. It is very satisfying designing a solution that is then built and deployed – and used by many people. My advice to fellow INTPs – make sure you spend effort and energy on the people side, too. Not being seen to care about the people side of work was one of the biggest mistakes I made. INTPs need to make a better/bigger effort on that side.”*

*“I am a flight analyst – mostly managing budgets, performing detail oriented checks, basis statistics and trend analysis. I work from home. I love working with numbers and looking at patterns and trends to predict future performance. It is important to remember to look at yourself and your ideals and preferences and try not to be influenced by others. That may be difficult in this current job climate, not just grabbing what you can get, but you need to have the confidence in yourself and not be afraid to change and seek alternatives.”*

*“I am a research scientist, in the pharmaceutical field. Pretty close to my dream job now, after 25 years. Process of getting there was difficult because of the need for very careful attention to detail in research.”*

*“I am a writer currently. I love writing and using my imagination. I write mysteries – I love creating a paper mystery and then spending half my day solving it so I can write it and do it all again with the next book of the series. However, if I had an opportunity to change careers, I would be a professional musician. I play guitar and I like to sing, so I would like to start a band someday. I love music! That may seem strange coming from an INTP, but remember that there is no such thing as the need to follow a stereotype. And just because someone else has a higher rank or badge than you does not mean they are smarter than you or should be treated differently than any other nut. Do what makes you happy.”*

*“I am a professional engineer, designing buildings, bridges and all kinds of machines. I do a lot of projects that other engineers do not want to do because they are unusual. I have worked for a large international company designing machines, then switched to a company nearer to my original home*

*town – after joining, I worked in manufacturing, then moved to R&D, then to Factory design. After a while, I started my own business designing buildings. This is my dream job, except for the part where you have to collect money. I also do all the accounting including the tax returns for the company.”*

As you can see, INTPs can be found in a variety of jobs, ranging from flight analysis to engineering. It is not the role itself that matters, but the INTP’s ability to use their imagination and efficiency-oriented strategic thinking skills. There are fields that are more INTP-friendly than others (e.g. science, technology or engineering), but people with this personality type can carve out their niche anywhere, if circumstances are right and they are willing to put in the effort.

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