

INTP Essentials

Designer Theorizer™

Introverting • iNtuiting • Thinking • Perceiving



Core Themes

INTPs like to explore ideas to deepen their expertise. They notice new patterns and elegant connections. They easily cross boundaries of thought. They play with ideas and detach to analyze. They clarify, reference, and define. INTPs have a talent to design and redesign. They are open to try whatever starts up their imagination. They like to reflect on thinking. They hold to core principles and solid models. Making discoveries brings them joy. They struggle to attend to the physical world.

Unpack the Stack: INTPs...

Lead with “Skillful Sleuthing” (Ti)

Analyze and define situations, solve problems, and apply leverage according to universal logical principles.

Support by “Excited Brainstorming” (Ne)

Perceive, pursue, and play with life’s many potential possibilities, facilitating the promising ones.

Struggle at “Cautious Protecting” (Si)

Reference a massive storehouse of rich past experiences as they cultivate familiarity, comfort, and stability.

Aspire to “Friendly Hosting” (Fe)

Tend relationships, social norms, and people’s needs and values as they organize and make thoughtful decisions.



Let’s explore...

this type from various angles including 4 developmental variants. As you read, consider what fits for you (or others), what has remained the same or changed over time, and options for where to go from here.

How INTPs Lead with Heroism

Refine Decision Making

Clarify what’s universal, true or worthwhile. Often appear quietly receptive. Trust own judgments.

Skillful Sleuthing

Gain leverage using a framework.

Introverted Thinking (Ti)

Study a situation from different angles and fit it to a theory, framework, or principle. This often involves reasoning multiple ways to objectively and accurately analyze problems. Rely on complex/subtle logical reasoning. Adept at deductive thinking, defining and categorizing, weighing odds and risks, and/or naming and navigating. Notice points to apply leverage and subtle influence. Value consistency of thought. Can shut out the senses and “go deep” to think, and separate body from mind to become objective when arguing or analyzing. Tend to back-track to clarify thoughts, and withhold deciding in favor of thorough examination. May quickly stop listening.

What flavor of Skillful Sleuthing?

INTPs can express this process in two ways. They likely develop a bias for one way early in life and may develop the other later.

“Critic” Ti

***Analytic/Yang Style:** active,
focused, fixed, outward,
top down*

Stubborn on principles. Stick to a singular, most worthy framework that can explain everything. Define precisely. Provide expert logic and guidance. Bring order to ideas. Correct errors, poor thinking, and wrong approaches.

“Systemist” Ti

***Holistic/Yin Style:** receptive,
diffuse, flexible, inward,
bottom up*

Take multiple points of view. Find patterns in the chaos. Notice how systems scale, and apply principles in a fluid way. People, art, nature, and technology all interrelate. Understand and find leverage in the messiness of life.

How INTPs Give Flexible Support

Energize the Process

Seek out stimuli. Often appear random, emergent, and enthusiastic. Attend to the here and now.

Excited Brainstorming

Explore numerous emerging patterns.

Extraverted iNtuiting (Ne)

Perceive and play with ideas and relationships. Wonder about patterns of interaction across various situations. Keep up a high-energy mode that helps you notice and engage potential possibilities. Think analogically: stimuli are springboards to generate inferences, analogies, metaphors, jokes, and more new ideas. Easily guess details. Adept at “what if?” scenarios, mirroring others, and even role-playing. Can shift a situation’s dynamics and trust what emerges. Mental activity tends to feel chaotic, with many highs and lows at once, like an ever-changing “Christmas tree” of flashing lights. Often entertain multiple meanings at once. May find it hard to stay on-task.

What flavor of Excited Brainstorming?

INTPs can express this process in two ways. They likely develop a bias for one way early in life and may develop the other later.

“Marketer” Ne

Analytic/Yang Style: active,
focused, fixed, outward,
top down

Put on a show. Pitch and juggle many ideas, trusting quantity over quality in search of advantages or gains. Recruit others and rely on strong energy of ideas to shift situations to one’s liking. Court uncertainty for progress.

“Catalyst” Ne

Holistic/Yin Style: receptive,
diffuse, flexible, inward,
bottom up

Notice subtle patterns. Negotiate toward a novel win-win outcome with a relaxed, subtle style. Use humor and disguises. Include and promote others. Search for the highest quality potential possibilities for everyone’s gain.

INTP Self-Portrait

From Conversations*: *What's it like to be you?*



I want to know the truth and get down to the bottom of things. It's an internal life, living in the head, theorizing constantly about how things work.

I can link many thoughts and shoot off in multiple directions at once in an attempt to clarify and explain things really well or to try to represent the fullness of who I am and all the different things I can do and can't do. I like to design—not just implementation but the stuff before that. There is a goal, a theme, and I start from that and work through the specifics one by one, keeping the whole thing integrated as I go, until I come up with “the elegant solution.” Often when I talk to people they only get from me a few steps—one, thirteen, a hundred. That's all that gets verbalized, and what's very clear to me either I've forgotten or find unnecessary to say out loud, which can come across as confusing at times.

I am very knowledge and big picture oriented. I want to bring everything that can be known into understanding a problem or situation. I enjoy working with those who think like I do but verbalize better. We can end up leaping forward rapidly and building off of ideas, asking questions with an answer in mind but wanting to verify things and learn more. If I am knowledgeable in that area, I always have something to add, to help better understand the idea and add something new. Although sometimes, even when I know we agree, people feel like I am trying to challenge them, which is frustrating because I am just doing it out of excitement. I try to understand all the variables and possible influences and then apply as broad a range of information as I can bring to the problem, to impact why the problem exists. I am interested in developing new skills and trying new ideas with those skills, and I am a good team member, and yet sometimes a little group work can go a long way. Most of all, I love to learn.

Central for me is honesty and integrity, especially intellectual integrity. If it's not an honest approach to the issue at hand or to the rela-

* Reprinted from *16 Personality Types: Descriptions for Self-Discovery*

tionship or organization, then it becomes an illusion—it only appears to have substance. I respect people who are genuine, honest, and open and doing what they are good at and what they enjoy and are up front about what is important to them.

I have a penchant for clarity. Some people say I'm hairsplitting, but there is value in precision.

I don't like sloppy thinking, waste, and redundancy, and I am uncomfortable with sending out something that isn't as good as it can be, but it has to go out anyway. I like things thought through. Incompetence just sets me right off. I have very little tolerance or patience, especially if the person is above me or isn't really trying. I don't think I push people any harder than I push myself and most people probably push less, which is where conflict comes in. Some people say my standard may be way out of whack and I assume the other person is competent. I like to avoid conflict at all possible costs, but if it reaches a point where I can't go anywhere unless this gets resolved, then I will jump in and take care of it. That takes me a long time and I will go miles out my way to avoid that. It's an ongoing decision between fairness and not letting people walk all over me.

There is this constant balancing act between self-confidence and questioning myself. Sometimes I feel secure and comfortable about knowing and thinking about and recognizing a lot and knowing how to learn new skills and ideas and concepts. But I have an almost instant ability to detect limitations—not knowing enough, picking out what's missing, adding in an always-present feeling that it's not quite right, and not knowing everything there is to know with insufficient time to learn everything that is important.

I can be seen as too unfeeling, too quick to start into work with not enough basis laid out for the day, and I'm not much for the personal amenities or socializing. Yet it is important that others are aware they are important to me. It's not the first thing, but it's in my awareness. I tend to try solving personal problems all by myself. Then sometimes I wind up without accurate information from others or about how it will affect others. I believe there must be an answer or a solution if I can just figure it out.

INTP Reminders* for Growth and Success

- ☐ Observing and asking questions are among your greatest gifts.
- ☐ Find a comfortable, collegial environment where you can play with and generate ideas.
- ☐ Locate your own interests.
- ☐ When explaining something, try to give three complete examples.
- ☐ Keep an eye on areas where thinking is rigid.
- ☐ If you express your vision and passion for the potential effect of your ideas and principles, then people will listen.
- ☐ Maintain openness to what is true socially or psychologically—as well as conceptually.
- ☐ Try to maintain some links to enjoy life's pleasantries; similarly, design a work area mostly free of mundane demands.
- ☐ Use multiple models for how to be diplomatic.
- ☐ Remember that when critiquing others' ideas, your questions about improvement will be received and acted on more often than your criticism.
- ☐ Acknowledge the physical world, your body, and the worth of anecdotal observation—or you may likely just float away.
- ☐ Find people who can turn your ideas into useful products that see daylight.
- ☐ Observe the observational processes of others.
- ☐ Enjoy the soothing sensation of walking barefoot in the grass.
- ☐ It's okay to express emotion.

* Adapted from *Quick Guide to the 16 Personality Types in Organizations*



What Now?

Now that you've explored INTP:

1. How do the strengths and challenges of this type show up in your life?
2. What's an insight or goal you can act on today in some way?
3. See the later chapters to leverage your subtype, neurotic zone, energy, and aspirations.