

ISTJ Essentials

Planner Inspector™

Introverting • Sensing • Thinking • Judging



Core Themes

ISTJs like to be prepared and draw up plans. They take responsibility as best they can. They get work done first, are active in the community, and loyal to their roles. Doing the right thing is important to them. Every day they strive to cultivate good habits. ISTJs bear life's burdens and cross bridges of adversity. They have a talent to plan, sequence, fill in details, and note what's missing. They have a sense of history and a subtle sense of humor. Learning so much in hindsight pains them at times.

Unpack the Stack: ISTJs...

Lead with “Cautious Protecting” (Si)

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

Support with “Timely Building” (Te)

Utilize measurable data, tools, resources, and efficient procedures as they organize and make effective decisions.

Struggle at “Quiet Crusading” (Fi)

Listen to their feelings, convictions, and conscience to make choices that align with their identity and beliefs.

Aspire to “Excited Brainstorming” (Ne)

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



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 ISTJs Lead with Heroism

Chart the Process

Reflect on data and perceptions. Often appear focused and preoccupied. Attend to reference points.

Cautious Protecting

Stabilize with a predictable standard.

Introverted Sensing (Si)

Review and practice to specialize and meet group needs. Constant practice “burns in” how-to knowledge and helps build your storehouse. Specialization helps you reliably fill roles and tasks. Improve when following a role-model or example. Easily track where you are in a task. Often review the past and can relive events as if you are there again. Carefully compare a situation to the customary ways you’ve come to rely. In touch with body sensations. Strong memory for kinship and details. Rely on repetition. Check what’s familiar, comforting, and useful. Tend to stabilize a situation and invest for future security. May over-rely on authority for guidance.

What flavor of Cautious Protecting?

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

“Defender” Si

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

Act as an anchor. On guard, and guard others. A firm sense of culture and history. Stick with the strongest impressions from your upbringing. Prefer convenience and familiarity. Block big changes. Traditional. Aim to civilize.

“Hearth” Si

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

Maintain home and traditions. Draw on a big memory bank of sense impressions. Feel grounded. Adapt to the group’s changes and flex to others’ will. Prefer comfort and safety. Sensitive to subtle sensory variations.

How ISTJs Give Flexible Support

Expedite Decision Making

Proactively meet goals. Often appear sure and confident.
Organize and fix to get positive results soon.

Timely Building

Measure and construct for progress.

Extraverted Thinking (Te)

Make decisions objectively based on measures and the evidence before you. Focus on word content, figures, clock units, and visual data. Find that “facts speak for themselves”. Tend to check whether things are functioning properly. Can usually provide convincing, decisive explanations. Value time, and highly efficient at managing resources. Tend to utilize mental resources only when extra thinking is truly demanded. Otherwise, use what’s at hand for a “good enough” result that works. Easily compartmentalize problems. Like to apply procedures to control events and achieve goals. May display high confidence even when wrong.

What flavor of Timely Building?

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

“Manager” Te

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

Eyes success at a few ambitious goals. Speak logically and confidently. Apply a business mindset to affairs. Manage and drive others as resources to get things done. May put speed and profit above usefulness or accuracy.

“Builder” Te

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

Helpful hard worker. Efficient, frugal, economical, and timely. Focus on doing work right. Avoid distractions. Perfect details and optimize functionality. Comfortable with different forms of complexity and multiple projects.

ISTJ Self-Portrait

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



I think for the most part I try to make my life pretty structured, and one thing that other people can depend on is that I have a very strong sense of duty.

I'm a team player but I work best with some time alone. I like it when everything is laid out and I can just concentrate on doing the job. I hate it when I don't know where I am going, and I like feedback so I know I'm on the right track. If part of the job entails ambiguity, that's fine just as long as the goal is to reduce ambiguity. I like being financially secure with the bills paid on time so my family can enjoy the things that we like to do. I like to have a fallback plan. I do like to laugh and have fun too, but work is more important to me, and then I make my little jokes. I always think I have to get my work done before I can go out or go home, when I can just sit down and relax without anything hanging over my head. I take responsibility seriously, and if I'm going to put my name on something, my desire is to insure it's as good as it can be.

A sense of right and wrong is extremely important, and I will not just stand by and watch people doing things wrong. It really tears me apart. I tend to want things in order and people doing the right things. I want to have some rules. I always wanted to please people, and a safe environment to me is where I don't have to compete with anyone else's wishes. If I get into a situation where I feel very strongly and can't articulate the words or can't win, I just don't say anything. I tend to put up with conflict rather than deal with it. I try to deal with stress, but I am not necessarily a good confronter. I would like to be more of a stress avoider.

I find myself duty bound sometimes and find that I do things because of what's expected of me. People can trust and count on me, and I am very dependable, almost to a fault. I strive to keep balance between work and home, and if I'm going to provide for my family I'm going to have to swallow some things at work. When I see families that really want to be together, that's a relationship that those people worked at for many years to achieve. Being a friend means caring enough about an

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

individual to call them to see how they are doing, and if I can see someone has held true to their word, then they've probably gained my trust. If you were to ask me to define the word *love*, you would get responses like *caring, responsibility, and loyalty*.

I am a very private person and I don't like a lot of attention. Although I enjoy being with people, observing them, and just being a part of the group, I really like some solitude. People who don't know me perceive me as pretty formal and rigid, and then I'll get out of character and people don't know how to deal with that. They misinterpret my subtle sense of humor. I do have some ability to improvise every once in a while. I take a lot of pleasure in the simple things.

With a problem, I will try to look at all the parts and line them up to insure I don't miss something. I have to force myself to look at the big picture and solve it before I can say, "Yes, this is going to work." I'm not the idea person, but if I have experience I will give my opinion about how I think it should be done. If it's new, I am very much apt to sit back and take it all in and sit on it and think about it. I try to catch myself, but it's so unnatural for me to see the good side of things, and turning around my perspective takes a lot out of me. I want a rock-solid case for why I feel the way I do. A lot of my ideas are very practical, not theoretical—the down-to-earth stuff people really need to know. Sometimes when people don't see my point, I tend to withdraw or stand back.

I can't stand people who don't care for others, who are irresponsible or rude, who shoot their mouth off without knowing what they are talking about or who don't do what they are supposed to do and want something for nothing. I especially can't tolerate people who don't take other people's time or privacy into consideration.

I get up in the morning and do my routine. And I take time at the end of each day to try to plan what's happening the next day, what I'm going to be working on first, second, third, and so on through out the day, to eliminate the unexpected. Sometimes I might carry a book or something in case I have to wait somewhere. That makes life easy and full. Stability is important to me and change may not be that easy, but variety is good too. I seek advice when I need to change.

ISTJ Reminders* for Growth and Success

- ☐ Find a place that appreciates your attention to responsibility while letting you care for yourself.
- ☐ You don't have to always please everyone.
- ☐ Remember that what you have found in your life is not what many others find in theirs.
- ☐ It is safer to take small incremental risks rather than a huge impulsive one; to do your homework and really use others' advice in making big decisions.
- ☐ Live with people who get you out in the world to have fun.
- ☐ Remember to kick off your shoes when it's time to relax.
- ☐ Remember, not everything needs a checklist.
- ☐ Practice naming and expressing your feelings.
- ☐ Seek volunteer experiences that engage your personal side and expand your identity.
- ☐ Try to learn three lessons from your children's successes, or from the younger generation.
- ☐ Sometimes your head will have to swim before your hard work can assure security.
- ☐ Stay well connected to friends.
- ☐ You can learn from conflict.
- ☐ Ask yourself what it takes to soften your heart.
- ☐ Allow others to do things their own way or they will walk out of your life.
- ☐ Past a certain point, repetition does not count as experience.

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



What Now?

Now that you've explored ISTJ:

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.