

Communication Style Self-Assessment

● What's Your Style?

Consider each of the following questions separately and select a response that corresponds to the description that best fits you. If you have trouble selecting only one answer, ask yourself which response, at work, would be the most natural or likely for you to make.

Once your responses are scored, you will notice you are not just one style, and neither is anyone else so you have to adjust your communication accordingly. It is important not to label someone because we are all different and complex so no one fits into a box. This tool, as with other tools, is meant to be a guide and to give you ideas but the best learning is through trial, error, reflection and trying again.

There are no right answers to these questions, so base your response on how you are today, not how you think you should be or would like to be in the future.

1 When talking to a colleague...

- a) I maintain eye contact the whole time.
- b) I alternate between looking at the person and looking down.
- c) I look around the room a good deal of the time.
- d) I try to maintain eye contact but look away from time to time.

2 If I have an important decision to make...

- a) I think it through completely before deciding.
- b) I go with my gut instincts.
- c) I consider the impact it will have on other people before deciding.
- d) I run it by someone whose opinion I respect before deciding.

3 My office or work area mostly has...

- a) Family photos and sentimental items displayed.
- b) Inspirational posters, awards and art displayed.
- c) Graphs and charts displayed.
- d) Calendars and project outlines displayed.

4 If I am having a conflict with a colleague...

- a) I try to help the situation along by focusing on the positive.
- b) I stay calm and try to understand the cause of the conflict.
- c) I try to avoid discussing the issue causing the conflict.
- d) I confront it right away so that it can get resolved as soon as possible.

5 When I talk on the phone at work...

- a) I keep the conversation focused on the purpose of the call.
- b) I spend a few minutes chatting before getting down to business.
- c) I am in no hurry to get off the phone and don't mind chatting for a while.
- d) I try to keep the conversation as brief as possible.

6 If a colleague is upset...

- a) I ask if I can do anything to help.
- b) I leave them alone because I don't want to intrude on their privacy.
- c) I try to cheer them up and help them to see the bright side.
- d) I feel uncomfortable and hope they get over it soon.

7 When I attend meetings at work...

- a) I sit back and think about what is being said before offering my opinion.
- b) I put all my cards on the table so my opinion is well known.
- c) I express my opinion enthusiastically, but listen to other's ideas as well.
- d) I try to support the ideas of the other people in the meeting.

8 When I make a presentation in front of a group...

- a) I am entertaining and often humorous.
- b) I am clear and concise.
- c) I speak relatively quietly.
- d) I am direct, specific, and sometimes loud.

9 When a colleague is explaining a problem to me...

- a) I try to understand and empathise with how they are feeling.
- b) I look for the specific facts pertaining to the situation.
- c) I listen carefully for the main issue so that I can find a solution.
- d) I use my body language and tone of voice to show them that I understand.

10 When I attend training programs or presentations...

- a) I get bored if the person moves too slowly.
- b) I try to be supportive of the speaker, knowing how hard the job is.
- c) I want it to be entertaining as well as informative.
- d) I look for the logic behind what the speaker is saying.

11 When I want to get my point across to colleagues...

- a) I listen to their point of view first and then express my ideas gently.
- b) I strongly state my opinion so that they know where I stand.
- c) I try to persuade them without being too forceful.
- d) I explain the thinking and logic behind what I am saying.

12 When I am late for a meeting or appointment...

- a) I don't panic but call ahead to say that I will be a few minutes late.
- b) I feel bad about keeping the other person waiting.
- c) I get very upset and rush to get there as soon as possible.
- d) I apologise profusely once I arrive.

13 I set goals and objectives at work that...

- a) I think I can realistically attain.
- b) I feel are challenging and would be exciting to achieve.
- c) I need to achieve as part of a bigger objective.
- d) Will make me feel good when I achieve them.

14 When explaining a problem to a co-worker whom I need help from...

- a) I explain the problem in as much detail as possible.
- b) I sometimes exaggerate to make my point.
- c) I try to explain how the problem makes me feel.
- d) I explain how I would like the problem to be solved.

15 If colleagues are late for a meeting with me in my office...

- a) I keep myself busy by making phone calls or working until they arrive.
- b) I assume they were delayed a bit and don't get upset.
- c) I call to make sure that I have the correct information (date, time, and so on).
- d) I get upset that the person is wasting my time.

16 When I am behind on a project and feel pressure to get it done...

- a) I make a list of everything I need to do, in what order, by when.
- b) I block out everything else and focus 100 percent on the work I need to do.
- c) I become anxious and have a hard time focusing on my work.
- d) I set a date to get the project done by and go for it.

17 When I feel verbally attacked by a colleague...

- a) I tell them to stop it.
- b) I feel hurt but usually don't say anything about it to them.
- c) I ignore their anger and try to focus on the facts of the situation.
- d) I let them know in strong terms that I don't like their behaviour.

18 When I see a colleague whom I like and haven't seen recently...

- a) I give them a friendly hug.
- b) I greet them but don't shake their hand.
- c) I give them a firm but quick handshake.
- d) I give them an enthusiastic handshake that lasts a few moments.

● Results:

Based on your answers to the questionnaire, you have been scored on four specific working styles.

They are:

WORKING STYLE	SCORE
Driver [DR]	
Expressive [EX]	
Amiable [AM]	
Analytical [A]	

The style where you scored the most points is your *primary working style*.

The four terms (Amiable, Analytical, Driver and Expressive) were originally coined by Dr. David Merrill, founder of Tracom Consulting Group.

If you are interested in reading more about the research done by Dr. Merrill and his associates, read *Personal Styles and Effective Performance: Make your Style Work for You* by Dr. David Merrill and Roger Reid (Radnor, PA.: Chilton, 1981).

● Peter Urs Bender's Guide to Strengths and Weaknesses of Personality Types

Each communication/personality type has different strengths & weaknesses. Here are some things to watch for in yourself, and in the people you work with.

TYPE	STRENGTHS	POTENTIAL WEAKNESSES
Driver	Independent Decisive Determined	Has trouble operating with others Does not take time to consider other perspectives Domineering; too focused on doing it "my way"
Expressive	Good communicator Enthusiastic Imaginative	Talks too much Comes on too strong Dreamer; unrealistic
Amiable	Supportive Patient Diplomatic	Tends to conform to wishes of others No time boundaries; things do not get done Not assertive or directive
Analytical	Thinking Thorough Disciplined	Excludes feelings from decisions Goes too far; perfectionist Too rigid or demanding of self/others

● The Driver

The Driver is a high achiever – a mover and shaker who is definitely not averse to risk. The individual is extroverted, strong-willed, direct, practical, organised, forceful, and decisive. Look for someone who tells it the way it is and is very persuasive. Watch out or you'll be worn down and bowled over. A driver is task rather than relationship-oriented and wants immediate results.

This individual is not concerned with how something is done, but what is being done, and what results can be expected. *"What"* is their battle cry. *"What's going on? What's being done about it? What you should do is ...!"*

The Driver can be stubborn, domineering, impatient, insensitive, and short-tempered, with little time for formalities or niceties. They can also be demanding, opinionated, controlling, and uncompromising – or even overbearing, cold, and harsh.

The Driver's pleasure is power, control, and respect. Their pain is loss of respect, lack of results, and the feeling that he or she is being taken advantage of.

- Wants to know "what" – what will this do for me
- Wants to save time
- Values results
- Loves being in control, in charge, doing it their way
- Fears giving up control
- Often extroverted but does not show emotions.

When communicating with a Driver:

- Focus on the task; talk about expected results
- Be business-like and factual
- Provide concise, precise, and organised information
- Discuss and answer "what" questions
- Argue facts, not feelings
- Don't waste time; don't argue details
Provide options.

● The Expressive

The Expressive, a verbally adept personality, is engaging, accommodating, supportive of others, persuasive, socially adept, and relationship rather than task-oriented. They love to be one of the gang, and are always ready for something new and exciting, especially if the gang is ready to participate.

Additional strengths include enthusiasm, diplomatic skills, and the ability to inspire others.

Weaknesses involve impatience, a tendency to generalise, verbal assaults, and sometimes irrational behavior. The Expressive can also be egotistical, manipulative, undisciplined, reactive, unorganised, and abrasive.

The Expressive readily exchanges information and life experiences. Their main need is to be appreciated and accepted. The Expressive's pleasure is recognition and approval. Their pain is isolation and lack of attention.

- Wants to know "who" – who else is involved
- Values appreciation, applause a pat on the back
- Loves social situations and parties
- Likes to inspire others
- Fear being rejected.

When communicating with an Expressive:

- Focus on developing a relationship
- Try to show how your ideas will improve their image
- Be enthusiastic, open, and responsive
- Relate to the need to share information, stories, and experience
- Be forthcoming and willing to talk
- Ask and answer "who" questions
- Remember to be warm and approachable at all times
- Work to minimise their direct involvement with details or personal conflicts.

● The Amiable

Devoted, consistent, dependable, and loyal, the Amiable is a hard worker and will persevere long after others have given up. They are a team player, cooperative and easy to get along with, trustful, sensitive and a good listener. Working in groups with cooperative individuals, the Amiable tries to avoid confrontation. They enjoy company, perform best in a stable environment, and often have a stabilising effect on others.

Weaknesses include indecision and an inability to take risks. Amiables are often too focused on others, conforming, quiet, and passive. They often won't speak up for themselves, are too compliant and nice, and often painstakingly slow to make decisions.

The Amiable's pleasure is stability and cooperation. Their pain is change and chaos.

- Wants to know "why" – why am I doing this
- Wants to build relationships
- Loves to give support to others
- Values suggestions for others
- Fears losing trust or having disagreements
- Tend to display emotions
- Often introverts thought.

When communicating with an Amiable:

- Be relaxed and agreeable
- Maintain the status quo
- Be logical and systematic
- Create a plan with written guidelines
- Be prepared to answer "why" questions
- Be predictable
- Agree clearly and often
- Use the word "we"
- Don't push, don't rush
- Compliment them as a team player; be a good listener.

● The Analytical

The Analytical is polite but reserved, logical, fact and task-oriented. This person's focus is on precision and perfection. Other strengths include persistence, diligence, caution, and a systematic approach.

Weaknesses involve being withdrawn, boring, quiet, reclusive, and even sullen at times. If they seem indecisive, it's because of a need to assess all the data. Perfectionism can be a fault if the Analytical pushes it too far. This person is definitely not a risk-taker.

The Analytical needs to be right, and won't openly discuss ideas until confident in a decision. Their pleasure is accuracy. Pain is to be wrong and criticised.

- Wants to know how things work
- Wants to be accurate, have accuracy with others
- Values numbers, stats, ideas
- Loves details
- Fears being embarrassed or losing face
- Often introverted and hide feelings.

When communicating with an Analytical:

- Be systematic, thorough, deliberate, and precise.
- Focus on the task
- Be prepared to answer many "how" questions
- Provide analysis and facts
- Don't get too personal
- Recognise and acknowledge the need to be accurate and logical
- Don't rush unnecessarily
- Expect to repeat yourself
- Allow time for evaluation
- Use lots of evidence
- Compliment the precision and accuracy of the completed work.

● Adjusting to Other Communication Styles

Communicating with a Driver/Action oriented person:

- Focus on the result first; state the conclusion at the outset.
- State your best recommendation; do not offer many alternatives.
- Be as brief as possible.
- Emphasise the practicality of your ideas.
- Use visual aids.

Communicating with a Process/Analytical oriented person:

- Be precise; state the facts.
- Organise your discussions in a logical order:
 - Background
 - Present situation
 - Outcome.
- Break down your recommendations.
- Include options and alternatives with pros and cons.
- Do not rush a process-oriented person.
- Outline your proposal.

Communicating with a People /Amiable oriented person:

- Allow for small talk; do not start the discussion right away.
- Stress the relationship between your proposal and the people concerned.
- Show how the ideas worked well in the past.
- Indicate support from well-respected people.
- Use an informal writing style.

Communicating with an Idea/Expressive oriented person:

- Allow enough time for discussion.
- Do not get impatient when they go off on tangents.
- Try to relate the discussed topic to a broader concept or idea.
- Stress the uniqueness of the idea or topic at hand.
- Emphasise future value or relate the impact of the idea to the future.
- If writing, try to stress the key concepts that underlie your recommendation at the outset. Start with an overall statement and work toward the particulars.