

# Personality Types and Learning Preferences: Shaping Tutoring Methods to Myers-Briggs Types

by

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### Abstract

The idea that education needs to be more personalized to fit individual needs has increasingly become more popular in academic and educational circles; theories that utilize learning preferences offered a way to differentiate instruction based upon students' particular needs. However, what has often been overlooked is the idea that students' personalities require unique needs that should be addressed in the classroom. The goal for this tutor and academic coach training is to help fill that gap by enmeshing learning preference theory and personality theory so that tutors and coaches can best meet those needs in their sessions. It provides an overview of the Myers-Briggs (MBTI) personality preferences and the needs that go along with each one in order for tutors and coaches to be able to recognize preferences and adapt sessions accordingly. This training also covers the VARK theory and discusses how to utilize VARK learning preferences to best meet the needs of the various MBTI preferences.

## **Introduction to MBTI and Learning**

### **Overview of Training**

According to the MBTI website, “The purpose of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®) personality inventory is to make the theory of psychological types described by C. G. Jung understandable and useful in people's lives. The essence of the theory is that much seemingly random variation in the behavior is actually quite orderly and consistent, being due to basic differences in the ways individuals prefer to use their Perception and Judgment” (“MBTI Basics,” n.d., para. 1).

Each MBTI type is composed of four letters; each letter represents one of a “pair” of different psychological functions. The four function pairs are (in order) Extraversion versus Introversion, Sensing versus Intuition, Feeling versus Thinking, and Judging versus Perceiving (“MBTI Basics,” n.d.) . What’s important to remember is that these are all *preferences*; we all use all sixteen functions in our lives, but we naturally prefer certain functions over others (Payne, Sommer, & VanSant, 2009). We will be discussing these in more detail later. In this lesson, we

will be focusing not on the actual types, but on identifying students' preferences and understanding how learning preferences can be morphed to fit each preference.

For learning preferences, we will be using the VARK test. VARK stands for Visual, Aural, Read/Write, and Kinesthetic. These four types are learning preferences that people usually have.

**Activity.** (20 min) Take an abridged version of the MBTI test (*16 Personalities*), look over description, discuss with group. After learning about all the aspects, have students pair up and practice identifying strategies that work for that learner's preferences.

### **Extraversion (E) versus Introversion (I): Where Energy is Formed and Directed**

Extraversion (E) versus Introversion (I) is the first preference pair of the MBTI. These describe from where people obtain mental energy, where the energy is activated, and where they direct their mental energy. Another way to put it is that this describes the two ways of orienting ourselves to the world. Extraverts prefer to focus their attention on and get mental energy from the outside world; Introverts prefer to direct and focus their mental energy inwardly. Extraverts who spend too much time alone or self-reflecting can get drained, while Introverts can get drained after a certain level of social interaction (Center for Applications of Psychological Type [CAPT], n.d.; Dunning, 2003; Murphy, 2008; Payne et al., 2009). Note: Introversion is NOT correlated to shyness. There are many outgoing Introverts and shy Extraverts and vice versa. Introverts draw energy from their inner world, their reflections and thoughts, meaning that they need more alone time than Extraverts, which has often led to the stereotype of their being shy.

**Extraverts and Learning Styles.** Extraverts process information externally. They are social and like to learn through interaction and action and learn well by pairing up with other

students or doing hands-on activities. Extraverts often need to “talk things out,” as talking helps them come up with the solution. Typically, Extraverts like fewer instructions so they can get to action; they tend to learn well by trial and error (CAPT, n.d.; Dunning, 2003; Murphy, 2008; Payne et al., 2009). With these things in mind, tutors and coaches can do the following in order to best tap into Extraverts’ learning style:

- Work directly with them as much as possible.
- Give opportunities for students to talk about the concepts and information presented.
- Give opportunities to discuss problems and share thoughts and feelings (but do not expect the Extravert’s first thoughts and suggestions to be the final ones).
- Prompt Extraverts to think aloud (Dunning, 2003; Murphy, 2008; Payne et al., 2009).

**Introverts and Learning Styles.** Introverts usually like to reflect first to make sure they have a thorough understanding of the instructions and task; they focus their energy and process information internally. Their sequence of learning is to reflect, and then try something out, followed by further reflection. They prefer quiet places to work and often enjoy working on one thing for a long time, which allows ample time for reflection. They can often prefer to work through their thoughts initially by writing them down rather than talking them out. They learn best when they are given time to relate, understand, and process information on their own; they can be can be uncomfortable when asked to respond on demand because they usually like to think before they act or speak (CAPT, n.d.; Dunning, 2003; Murphy, 2008; Payne et al., 2009).



With these things in mind, tutors and coaches can do the following to best tap into Introverts' learning preferences:

- Include opportunities to reflect and process the information.
- Include opportunities for students to work independently and give them time to think about the problem.
- Give them sufficient time to think about the subject, including after you ask a question, and do not expect them to give an answer immediately.
- Give the opportunity for the student to process their thoughts through writing.
- Encourage everyone to share their thoughts and suggestions for solving the problem either verbally or in writing.
- Encourage them to share their thoughts and ideas (Dunning, 2003; Murphy, 2008; Payne et al., 2009).

### **Sensing (S) versus Intuition (N): How Perceptions Are Formed**

The next pair describes the two ways that people take in and perceive information. Perception deals with what information most attracts the mind and then, once engaged, how the mind utilizes this information to form a perception (Payne et al., 2009). The two ways of doing this are through Sensing and Intuition. Sensing indicates a preference for a more practical focus of attention on facts and details. Intuition indicates a preference for a more abstract focus on attention on patterns and possibilities (CAPT, n.d.; Dunning, 2003; Murphy, 2008; Payne et al., 2009).

**Sensing.** Sensing focuses on to specific, concrete information that can be verified with an experience of the moment or from an experience in the past. Think of using the five senses--

something is real because you can taste it, smell it, etc. They prefer information that is presented in a sequential, orderly format. Sensors form information through past or present experiences and put them together in a structured way, typically for a practical application. Sensing provides an understanding of “what is.” Sensors are engaged by reality, solid facts, and information, rather than imagination, abstraction, theories, or concepts. They can become frustrated with tasks that are future-oriented tasks that lack practical application. Once they grasp the concrete facts of a situation, their minds can then be stimulated to create and see new future possibilities. Students with Sensing preferences are not engaged with the word “imagine,” as it does not relate to something real as defined by concrete, known information about the present or past (CAPT, n.d.; Dunning, 2003; Murphy, 2008; Payne et al., 2009). With these things in mind, tutors and coaches can use the following tactics:

- Present information and tasks in an organized, orderly, sequential format, and give step-by-step instructions.
- Emphasize the present rather than the future.
- Have an immediate and realistic focus.
- Engage their senses as they work, if possible.
- Focus on specific facts/details of the problem.
- Be concrete, practical, and realistic in making suggestions for problem resolution.
- Present a structured organized presentation of the situation.
- Present the problem and solutions clearly and concisely. Do not “beat around the bush,” but instead go straight to the point.

- Begin by focusing on concrete information and details then expand outward to the concept, rather than starting with broader idea.
- Discuss specific, clear, and practical solutions (Dunning, 2003; Murphy, 2008; Payne et al., 2009).

**Sensing and other preferences.** While we have gone over the overall Sensing preferences, these preferences may alter based upon other preferences that the student has, such as Extraversion versus Introversion.

*Extraverted Sensing.* Sensing in Extraverted form gathers concrete information through direct physical experience in the outer environments; students with this preference enjoy experimenting with, finding, or manipulating tangible objects in order to accomplish a practical purpose. They tend to plunge into an activity quickly, wrapping their minds around the assignment as they go along (CAPT, n.d.; Dunning, 2003; Payne et al., 2009).

*Introverted Sensing.* Sensing in Introverted form gathers factual info quietly in a step-by-step fashion to structure a solid understanding of purpose and process before taking any overt action. Students like this may seem slow to become engaged when in reality they are actively making note of as many details as possible and filing them away in their minds to be retrieved as needed. In a group they are often the students who sit quietly without speaking while much discussion is under way and then later give the group an accurate and helpful synopsis of the points expressed in the discussion (CAPT, n.d.; Dunning, 2003; Payne et al., 2009).

**Intuition.** Intuition does not attend to specific facts and information, but to the meaning of the specifics. They often use their “sixth sense,” relying on hunches and inspirations. Intuition’s focus is on the big picture, on patterns, themes, and relationships. A mind engaged in

Intuition is interested in possibilities of the moment or the future and would rather deal with “what could be” rather than “what is.” They are drawn to imagination, current or future possibilities, symbols, metaphors, and patterns and associations, over factual information or pieces of data. Their minds make tangential associations that, to them, are related to the matter at hand, though others may not see the relationship. They most easily engage first with the big picture so that they have a context for grasping the specific pieces needed to make the possibility work. These minds are engaged both by the endless possibilities as well as the assignment’s focus on the future (CAPT, n.d.; Dunning, 2003; Murphy, 2008; Payne et al., 2009). Tutors and coaches can do the following in a session with a student with this preference:

- Focus on the implications and meaning of the situation.
- Present solutions that are creative, innovative, and future-oriented.
- Present the “big picture” when describing the problem. Do not worry about not giving all the details.
- Focus first on what facts mean and how they fit together; see links, possibilities, and relationships.
- Pay more attention to connections between and implications of facts than to facts and details alone.
- Provide students with the “big picture” of what they are to learn, and give enough attention to the implications and meaning of the situation.
- Include concepts and possibilities, patterns and relationships in your presentation
- Give opportunities for students to be creative, original, and imaginative
- Include a variety of activities in your session.

- Let the student set the pace of the session, when possible (Dunning, 2003; Murphy, 2008; Payne et al., 2009).

**Intuition and other preferences.** “Intuitive” students will usually follow the general principles outlined above, but their preferences may shift based upon their other preference pairs, specifically on Extraversion and Introversion.

*Extraverted Intuition.* Those who identify as both an Extrovert and as Intuitive use hunches and inspirations to see endless possibilities for something real in the outer world. These are the students who can visualize a hundred different uses for something like a paper clip, who like to make frequent changes in actual situations, or change the way people are dealing with a situation. They can make changes to project last minute as students think of one more idea that has occurred to them (CAPT, n.d.; Dunning, 2003; Payne et al., 2009).

*Introverted Intuition.* These students use hunches and inspiration for finding meaning or for delving deeper into the possibilities of an idea (Dunning, 2003; Payne et al., 2009).

### **Thinking and Feeling: How Judgments Are Made**

The third pair describes two opposite ways of making decisions and how people form judgments; it describes how people prefer to evaluate the perceptions they form and make a decision. Thinking tends to focus on logic and analysis. Feeling focuses on personal values and priorities. Note: The word “Feeling” is a bit misleading as those with Feeling preferences do not make decisions based upon emotion. Rather, when making decisions, they focus on what decision would best align with their personal values, as well as how their decisions may affect other people (CAPT, n.d.; Dunning, 2003; Murphy, 2008; Payne et al., 2009).

**Thinking.** Thinking involves stepping back from the perception and making a decision impersonally, through logic and analysis. The process looks for objective data in the perception and employs a cause-and-effect type of reasoning; it takes a linear view that considers logical consequences of the Perception. They like to determine a logical principle that can be applied to any number of situations. Their minds love to ask, “Why?” Those with the Thinking preference like to know assignment goals and the analytical components presented to them. They make learning decisions based on logical analysis of factors such as cost, schedule, goals, and needs. They tend to evaluate new information using logic and analysis and are most influenced by objective data and cause-and-effect relationships. The Thinking function seeks to problem solve with a goal or purpose in mind that requires logical analysis to achieve (CAPT, n.d.; Dunning, 2003; Murphy, 2008; Payne et al., 2009). Tutors and coaches can use the following tactics in a session:

- Allow them to analyze the problem and present a logical perspective
- Presenting the objective facts and brainstorming possible solutions.
- Encouraging them to express their views, and ask “What do you think about this situation?”
- Keep the session objective.
- Point out trouble areas and provide constructive feedback when need be.
- Present the facts and steps to the solution in a logical order.
- Give a logical purpose for what you are learning and working on.
- Give opportunities for students to analyze the information or problem.
- Allow students to discuss issues or the information.

- Allow the flow of information in the session to be brisk when possible (Dunning, 2003; Murphy, 2008; Payne et al., 2009).

**Thinking and other preferences.** “Thinking” students will typically interact in the way described above, but this will change based upon other preferences the student has.

*Extraverted Thinking.* These students are quick to make decisions and apply them to something in the real world. These students tend to set and adhere to deadlines, tend to take charge of situations, get people organized, and see that projects are completed (Dunning, 2003; Payne et al., 2009).

*Introverted Thinking.* These students are also quick to make decisions but are less inclined to impose them on people or situations directly. These students typically tend to make one of two approaches: they can appear critical and skeptical when they raise questions to get other people to see their points of view rather than state their view points directly, or they may not give any clues, keeping their thoughts to themselves. Probably the most independent of all personality types, they may be oblivious to needs and feelings of others in pursuit of this quest to reach the best conclusion possible (Dunning, 2003; Payne et al., 2009).

**Feeling.** Those with the preference of Feeling (different from emotional Feelings) make decisions based on subjective, person-centered values, particularly those that promote relationships and harmony. This function is keenly interested in the impact of a decision on people -- all the individual stakeholders. Given the opportunity, they will likely work to have a group’s judgment made by consensus in order to evaluate the decision’s potential impact on each person and to promote harmonious relationships among group members. They are engaged by the word “imagine.” These students acknowledge their concern for the people in the situation

along with their personal Feelings about the problem and possible solutions (CAPT, n.d.; Dunning, 2003; Murphy, 2008; Payne et al., 2009). To engage these students, coaches and tutors could:

- Ask them, “What are you Feeling?” Begin by talking about areas of agreement. They want harmony.
- Give the potential benefit of the information you are working with (such as ways that the information can help that student or others by their learning it).
- Establish a connection with student.
- Provide ongoing feedback to students throughout the session.
- Acknowledge personal contributions of the student to the session.
- Give opportunities to work together in completing activity (Dunning, 2003; Murphy, 2008; Payne et al., 2009).

**Feeling and other preferences.** The following principles will apply to all Feelers, regardless of the other preferences they have; however, those with different Extraversion/Introversion preferences will interact slightly differently, and therefore, it is important to be aware.

*Extraverted Feeling.* These students strive for outer harmony. More often are quick to make their opinions known, like to work with others, and lead groups toward common goal, particularly enjoy learning activities that involve human life experience, and they seek positive relationship with their teachers and peers (Dunning, 2003; Payne et al., 2009).

*Introverted Feeling.* These students strive just as diligently to create and maintain inner harmony. For more Introverted students, their Feeling function would like for the outer world to



be in agreement with their personal values since this contributes to their inner harmony, they are more willing to “agree to disagree” when others do not go along with those things they care most deeply about (Dunning, 2003; Payne et al., 2009).

### **Judging (J) versus Perceiving (P) Preferences: How to Relate to the Outside World**

This pair describes attitudes people take when relating to the outer world. The Judging-Perceiving dichotomy indicates if a person more often relates to the outer world through his or her judgment function or through his or Perception function. The Judging person tends to be decisive and prefer structure and control. The person who tends towards Perception tends to keep his or her options open and to prefer spontaneity and flexibility (CAPT, n.d.; Dunning, 2003; Murphy, 2008; Payne et al., 2009).

**Judging.** People with this preference want timely decisions; they seek closure and organize their time, projects, and overall lives in order to achieve this closure. Once they make a judgment, they often find it difficult to open their minds to other options; however, they find it easier to be more open-minded when a structure is in place first, such as a plan or deadline. In the classroom, they tend to begin working on projects or assignments and turn them in early or on time (CAPT, n.d.; Dunning, 2003; Payne et al., 2009). Tutors and coaches can do the following things in sessions with students with a Thinking preference:

- Set a specific goal (important for all sessions, but especially for these students) and provide very clear overview of session.
- Summarize what you covered at the end of the session, including the plan of action.
- Give long-range plans for studying or working on the subject/assignment and outline these plans.

- Present the problem in an organized manner.
- Acknowledge their need for closure; if you ask an open-ended question, make sure it is answered fully at some point (Dunning, 2003; Payne et al., 2009).

**Perceiving.** Other people prefer relating to the external environment through their Perceiving function, focusing more on the process. They want to keep options open as long as possible, leaving time and space for either more specific information (using Sensing) or for the discover of additional possibilities (using Intuition). They thrive on spontaneity and freedom. They may seem more easy going about assignments and may not show evidence of any work until the last minute. As these students gradually learn the importance of due dates, they develop their own sense of timing in order to meet these commitments (CAPT, n.d.; Dunning, 2003; Payne et al., 2009). Tutors and coaches can do the following to help these students:

- Present several possible solutions to the problem and allow them to choose.  
Recognize they like flexibility and a variety of options.
- Give options for how assignment can be completed.
- Provide some flexibility in your sessions.
- Allow them to exercise sense of curiosity.
- Present several possible solutions and allow them to choose.
- Acknowledge their desire for flexibility and a number of options (Dunning, 2003; Payne et al., 2009).

### **Learning Preferences: VARK**

Much like the four different preference pairs of the Myers-Briggs, students also have learning preferences. While there have been various types of learning preferences presented by

researchers or other professionals, the VARK learning styles is what we will be using, as it is one of the most commonly-used and easiest to understand. VARK stands for Visual, Aural, Read/Write, and Kinesthetic (Fleming, 1995; Fleming, 2006).

One important thing to note is that most students are multimodal, having more than one learning preference. Another thing to note is that everyone learns by all of these preferences; although a student may primarily prefer visual learning, they will still gain information aurally. If you have a student who appears to have one particular learning preference, you should still try to incorporate others into the session. (Durham, 2009; Fleming, 1995; Fleming, 2006; Harrington, 2014). In fact, students learn best when using more than one strategy (Harrington, 2014).

**Visual (V) Learning Preference.** Students with this preference gather information and meaning from visuals such as charts, graphs, flow charts, and other symbols that can be used to represent what might have been presented with words. They are more aware of their environment and their own place in it. They also gather meaning from such things as the layout of information, white space, formatting, text size and color, etc. While it may seem that visual learners just need a picture of everything, this is an oversimplification. They need visuals that *represent* the information. For instance, a visual learner would remember the hierarchy of a company's employee organization if it were presented in a chart; watching a movie (which is a "visual") about the same subject would not necessarily help this student, as the visual aid is not necessarily acting as a symbol for the information (Fleming, 1995; Fleming, 2006; University of Pennsylvania, 2009). Tutors and coaches can use the following tactics in a session:

- Draw diagrams, graphs, flowcharts, pictures, word pictures, or similar visual aids whenever possible.

- Use different text colors, text sizing, and underlining/italicizing/bolding to differentiate and explain information.
- Take advantage of white space, formatting, and different spatial arrangements to present information.
- Use “word pictures” in your verbal descriptions.
- Use gestures as a way to help explain (Fleming, 2006; University of Pennsylvania, 2009).

**Aural (A) Learning Preference.** This describes a preference for information that is spoken and/or heard. Students learn best from such things as lecture, discussion, oral feedback, oral presentations, tutorials, and talking with students or teachers. Their primary input comes from what they hear others say, and they will often place emphasis on the words of perceived experts (which is what tutors and coaches are) (Fleming, 1995; Fleming, 2006). Tutors and coaches can use these methods with aural learners:

- Allow them to explain new ideas or discuss the information out loud to you.
- Have them describe aloud their thought process and summarize what you have gone over at various points.
- Ask them to explain the material to you.
- Give clear directions (Fleming, 2006).

**Read/Write (R) Learning Preferences.** Those with this preference prefer information displayed as words either written or read. They place great importance on language and like to use lists, quotations, books, etc. Students with this preference can sometimes prefer to keep

distance between themselves and others, focusing on words as a connection (Fleming, 1995; Fleming, 2006). Tutors and coaches can use the following tactics in sessions:

- Use lists or outlines as you explain information or work through problems.
- Write down major points of the session, such as the goal.
- Allow and encourage them to write down what you go over in the session,
- Focus on using and giving resources related to reading, such as websites, lab manuals, textbooks, and their own lecture notes (Fleming, 2006).

**Kinesthetic (K) Learning Preference.** Kinesthetic learners learn through experience and practice, whether simulated or real. Their focus is on a connection to reality, through experiences, examples, simulation, or practice. This may invoke other modalities. For instance, a kinesthetic learner who comes to a tutoring session needing help writing an outline will benefit from actually writing the outline, rather than sitting and listening to a tutor describe how to do it. The key is that the student is connected to reality. Using the five senses is often an important key for Kinesthetic learners, because of its connection to reality. They can occasionally have difficulty with abstract ideas (Fleming, 1995; Fleming, 2006). Tutors and coaches can use the following tactics in sessions:

- Allow them to teach you the material, whenever possible.
- Engage their senses when possible.
- Allow them to engage in trial and error in order to get the solution.
- Focus on past experiences (such as case studies) so they can see the overall picture; connect the information to reality.

- Give good examples, past experiences, and real-life stories that connects to the information.
- Make them practice the new information or strategies.
- Minimize “instruction” time (Fleming, 2006).

### **Utilizing VARK Preferences for MBTI Preferences**

The learning theories and strategies behind VARK combined with our knowledge of the MBTI can be utilized to better help students with the various personality preferences. Tutors and coaches can use the specific learning strategies to target the specific needs of each preference. One thing to note is that different personality preferences are not connected to different learning strategies. While some learning and personality preferences may appear to have a natural link (for example, Sensors may seem to have a natural preference for kinesthetic learning because of Sensors’ gravitation towards learning through their senses), there has been no research that supports this. Tutors and coaches must instead try to focus on each student’s individual needs and learning preferences, while also incorporating as many different VARK strategies as is appropriate for each session (Durham, 2009; Fleming, 1995; Fleming, 2006; Harrington, 2014; Pashler, & Roher, 2012).

### **Using VARK for Extraverted Preferences**

Extraverted learners learn by interacting with the outside world, such as through talking things out with a classmate or trial and error. They gain and focus their mental energy from the outside world. They need interaction with the outside world in order to learn. Therefore, learning tactics should focus on connecting the information they are learning or studying to the outside world, such as through using their five senses. Extraverted Visual learners, for example, would

benefit from such tactics as creating their own visuals, which would tap into their need for interaction with the outside world. Such tactics could include rewriting class notes into a diagram, flowchart, or other visuals, or re-formatting the text (if typed) in such a way as to create a more visual picture of the flow of information.

**Using VARK for Introverted Preferences.** Introverted learners like to think and process information first before doing anything; they focus their energy inwardly, which is also where they get their energy. Study tactics should allow students to utilize their internal analytic thought process; for instance, even though an Introvert student may not have a strong aural learning preference, encouraging them to use aural tactics would allow them to hear, absorb, and process the information before they do anything with the information, such as an assignment or studying for a test. Introverted Visual learners would likely benefit from focusing on visuals already provided, because they can then think about the visual and internalize it, although having them create their own visuals is also a good tactic, although it taps more into the Extraverted side rather than Introverted side. If there are no visuals available, such as in their textbook or slides, creating visuals for them would benefit them.

**Using VARK for Sensing Preferences.** Sensors like to focus on reality, concrete examples, facts, and experiences, often focused more on the real world than on abstract concepts or imagination. Therefore, tactics for Sensor students should allow students to use their senses and focus on the facts and data of a situation, as well as focus on their need for structure and orderliness. For example, tactics for Sensing Visual Learners should focus on creating visuals that are sequential, orderly, and logical.

**Using VARK for Intuitive Preferences.** Intuitives like to focus on abstract concepts and imagination, looking at the bigger picture of reality; they are engaged by imagination and love to be creative. Tactics should allow them to be creative and engage their senses, as well as giving them hands-on experience. For instance, Intuitive Aural learners could be encouraged to create something out of a recorded lecture, such as recording and playing back their own notes on the lecture. For visual preferences, having them help create their own visuals will help tap into their need to have their senses engaged. Tactics should also tap into their preference to look at the larger picture, such as the symbols and relationships between various facts.

**Using VARK for Thinking Preferences.** Thinkers prefer to focus on logic, analysis, and objective, making decisions impersonally. Learning tactics should engage their need for logic and orderliness. For example, for Thinking Visual Learners, focus on creating visuals for them that are orderly, logical, and sequential.

**Using VARK for Feeling Preferences.** Feelers prefer to focus on subjective, person-centered values, particularly those that are centered around harmony and relationships. Tactics should focus on what they deem important (based upon their personal values) out of the material. While tutors and coaches should focus on helping the student learn and practice material, allow students when possible to take in lead in choosing what to focus to meet this need. While fostering independence is important for all sessions, work with the student as much as possible.

**Using VARK for Perceiving Preferences.** Perceivers engage in life focusing more on process rather than closure, unlike Judgers. They like to keep options open as long as possible and thrive on spontaneity and freedom. Tactics should allow them to engage in the process of



learning and applying information. Minimize “teaching” time whenever possible and get them actively involved, such as writing down the problems.

**Using VARK for Judging Preferences.** Judgers like to engage in life with structure, orderliness, and organization. Learning tactics should likewise be focused on their need to be structured, orderly, and organized. For example, for Judging Read/Write students, focus on helping them take notes that are sequential, clear, and organized. While goal-setting should be a part of every session, it would probably be useful to make a clear outline of the different points you will go through in the session, in order.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout this project, I learned several things I did not know, such as that different MBTI types or preferences are not linked to different learning preferences (which was a major assumption of mine) or that visual learning does not necessarily mean merely learning through pictures. However, the main things I learned from creating this training were also connected to my biggest struggle, which was finding material to work with. I spent two semesters looking for appropriate sources to use, and I found few sources that connected learning preferences to personality preferences. I was able to come up with a lot of research that discussed the various needs of each personality preferences, and how important meeting those needs were for the personalities in learning and in life in general. The first thing I learned, then, was how important it was for education to be able to meet the needs of students, and the second thing I learned was how little research there was connecting learning strategies to personality traits. While this training is not meant to be comprehensive, I hope it can help tutors and coaches begin thinking about meeting students’ needs in a new, enriched way so that they can best meet those students’

academic goals. This is, and should be, one of the ultimate goals of education: to not only send students out into the world with the most enriched academic experience possible and strategies that fit them as individuals, but also for tutors, coaches, and teachers of all kinds to create a more fulfilling educational experience for all whom they influence.

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Honors Capstone Project Explanation: Myers-Briggs and Learning Strategies

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The process of writing my Capstone began with choosing my topic. One of my big interests is personality/personality type theories such as the Enneagram or Myers-Briggs, so I knew that I wanted to do a project related to my interest. My Honors Capstone also doubled as my Special Interest Project (SIP) for the Student Success Center (SSC).

One of the things I find interesting about personality type is how much it affects so many things in individuals' lives, including how we approach being a student. Personality types can directly affect how we learn, and why we learn the way we do. With this in mind, my supervisor and I decided to develop a training curriculum to be taught to tutors and coaches on the Myers-Briggs personality preferences and their needs, how to identify these preferences in

students, and how to shape sessions to best meet students' needs in order to most effectively tutor or train them.

For the project, I chose the MBTI personality theory to focus on. While the validity of four-letter types themselves have sometimes been debated, there is more solid research backing the preference-pairs, such as extraversion-introversion. Besides the academic reasons, I personally like the MBTI preferences the most. Because of my obsession with personality types, I have looked into many including the MBTI, the Enneagram, and the DISC. I have found in my own experience that the preference pairs and the theory behind them seems to most helpfully explain differences and how people interact, communicate, and do things in real life. While the four-letter personality types themselves (I, myself, am an ENFP) are not one-to-one ratios of how people will think and act, I have found them very effective in my relationships with others. Knowing someone else's personality type has helped me understand differences in my relationships and therefore develop better relationships and limit conflict. When they are used as they are meant to be used, as an overall guideline, I have found the four-letter types to work. However, just knowing someone's four preferences out of the preference pairs is, to me, what is the most helpful, as these pairs describe where people get their mental energy from, where they direct it, how they view the world, and how they make decisions.

To help the tutors and coaches best understand how to work with the various personality preferences, I looked at different learning preference theories to frame the training. I chose the VARK because it is one of the most well-known and better-researched learning preference theories. Even other learning preference theories that I have run across will use the terms (such as "visual learner/kinesthetic learner") or have similar preferences. I also chose this because, in

my own life and observing others in my life, I have seen that using VARK is useful in helping people understand how they learn, and I have seen people make great strides in their academic work through the use of VARK.

Once I chose my subject and the lenses through which I would work, I began researching. I focused primarily on research about the MBTI, rather than VARK, as the main way I was using VARK was just to apply it to what I had for the MBTI. I used the official Myers-Briggs site, *The Myers & Briggs Foundation* (n.d.), as my starting point. This website provides a brief but excellent overview on the personality types and the preference pairs that make up the types. I used this as my main foundation for the definitions and explanations of the preferences in the training. The website also has resources, further books and articles that are endorsed by the site, for further information. This is where I got almost all of my resources, as they are officially endorsed by the MBTI Foundation. For the VARK, the main research I used was Neil Fleming's book *Teaching and Learning Styles: VARK Strategies* (2006). Neil Fleming created the VARK questionnaire, so I focused primarily on his work as the foundation of my work with VARK. Also, his book focuses on using VARK in teacher-student relationships, which I found particularly helpful since the basis of my work is focused on tutor-student relationships.

The paper begins with an introduction that overviews what the training will cover and why. At the end of the introduction is an activity in which the trainees will take an abridged version of the MBTI test, read over the result and explanations, and discuss their types in groups. I chose to put this in so that everyone could have some basic familiarity with the test and its preference pairs. The site I chose for the test gives percentages for each preference pair so that people can see how balanced their preferences are, as well as gives an explanation of the pairs

and the types themselves. The site I chose was [16personalities.com](http://16personalities.com) (n.d.). While this is not an official MBTI test, it is one of the more accurate non-official and free tests that is similar to the real test. By having the trainees take the test, they can begin to think about their own preferences and be able to apply this information they learn in the training to their own lives; this also helps them in sessions as tutors and coaches if they are aware of their own preferences to be able to shape the sessions to the students' own preferences.

After the introduction, the training focuses on the MBTI preference pair and learning. For example, I explain the first preference pair, extraversion-introversion, what this pair's preference is (this first pair describes how people attain mental energy and where they focus that energy), and how each preference interacts in a learning environment, as well as their overall needs. Based on these things, I give tutors a broad idea of what to do or focus on in sessions. By understanding the needs for each preference, the session will be focused on meeting the students' overall needs; by understanding students' learning needs, tutors and coaches can know how to teach them in a way that best suits each preference. For some preferences, I also give a brief overview on that preference paired with select other preferences, such as Intuition and Introversion (each are part of a separate preference pair). Preferences do not work in a bubble; each preference an individual has will necessarily shift how the student uses the other preferences.

The next section gives a brief overview of the VARK and goes over each learning preference - Visual, Aural, Read/Write, and Kinesthetic. For each preference, I cover what that preference needs, as well as ways that this need can be satisfied. Tutors and coaches must know both what each preference is, how to recognize it, and how to satisfy each preference.



After I covered VARK, I went over using VARK learning strategies for each MBTI preference. For each MBTI preference, I talked about how to use VARK in general to satisfy the needs of that MBTI type. For example, I began with a section entitled “Using VARK for Extraverted Preferences,” and I described the MBTI preference’s overall needs, what learning strategies might best fit those needs, and how to choose which strategies to pick.

My overall goal for this training is to help tutors and coaches more fully understand how important session customization is. The different personality preferences are important to know, as they are one of the foundations of who we are as people, including how we think, learn, and communicate. Learning strategies and preferences build off of this and focus on a specific way of how we think. Enmeshing these two -- showing how to utilize various learning strategies for personality preference -- helps to tap into the deeper parts of how we work, and can thus help form a more enriching learning experience and help students achieve higher academically.

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