

# EIGHT PREFERENCES FROM THE KEIRSEY TEMPERAMENT SORTER

By David Keirsey, *Please Understand Me II*  
Adapted by Dr. Helen Eckmann

The Keirsey Temperament Sorter is a valuable tool to define a person's temperament: one's customary frame of mind or natural disposition. It categorizes people based on observable personality traits, habits of communication, and patterns of action. The Keirsey Sorter is a personal inventory of your temperament and your preferences in various situations. At the end of the test, each person is categorized by their preference in each of four pairs of preference.

But before we discuss the four pairs of preference, here are some general concepts to keep in mind:

- First, no person is only *all* of one or *all* of the other of these four pairs. Rather, one can be a mix. For example, extroverted in some degree as well as introverted in some degree.
- Second, as time passes one's preferences may strengthen or weaken.
- Third, while debate continues, most believe that temperament is either inborn or develops very early in life - before personality emerges. However, if inborn or chosen later, the "functions" often develop and become stronger through use. For example, if a person uses her intuition, the intuition becomes more powerful; if a person uses her feelings, they become stronger. Conversely, if one doesn't use one's thinking or judging, these functions do not develop and become "rusty" with disuse.

At any rate, what is important are the descriptions of how people differ in their preferred action, not the names given the preferences; the preferences simply exist and vary in each and every person we work with. And our way of making a decision may use a different temperament and process than the people that we work (and live) with. Most people use a combination of all of these pairs, but the question is: Which method is used first, and which is the most comfortable?

**KEY: THERE IS NO WRONG OR RIGHT PREFERENCE - THE BEST "TEAMS" HAVE REPRESENTATIVES FROM ALL EIGHT CATEGORIES.**

## 1. EXTROVERSION (E) VS. INTROVERSION (I)

Extroverts are energized, or “tuned up,” by contact with other people. Talking to people, playing with people and working with people are what charge their batteries. Extroverts experience loneliness when they are not in contact with people. 75% of population is extroverted. Key phrase: Sociable.

Introverts, on the other hand, seem to draw their energies from a different source than do extroverts. Pursuing solitary activities, working quietly alone, these solitary activities seem to charge the batteries of the introvert. Introverts may feel alone in a crowd - sometimes the most alone in a crowd. Introverts desire space: private places in the mind and private environmental places. Key phrase: Breathing room.

Story: An extrovert goes to a library to do research - may want after fifteen minutes or so to strike up a conversation with the librarian to take a “short brain break,” while the introvert is happy to continue to sit quietly and do research.

Introverts have reported that they have gone through much of their lives believing that they ought to want more sociability. As a result, the introvert seldom provides adequately for her/his very legitimate desire for for breathing room, without experiencing a vague feeling of guilt.

### **Extrovert**

Sociability  
Breadth appeals  
External  
Extensive  
Interaction  
Multiple relationships  
Expenditure of energy  
External happenings

### **Introvert**

Territoriality  
Depth appeals  
Internal  
Intensive  
Concentration  
Limited relationship  
Conservation of energy  
Internal reactions

## 2. SENSATION (S) VS. INTUITION (N)

The sensation (sensible) person wants facts, trusts facts, and remembers facts. She/he believes in experience and history (personal and global). The sensible person wants to deal with the actual and with what really happened, and they don't want to think much above what might have been or what will be in the future. They tend to tolerate very little nonsense. Sensible people are more accurate in observing details. The person who has a natural preference for sensation probably describes her/himself first as practical. 75% of population reports preference for sensation

When entering a situation, the intuitive person seems to scan, glance, radiate at things and people, at times aware only of that which is related to her current preoccupation, missing details noted by the sensible. The language, which inspires the intuitive, has no ring for the sensible. The intuitive finds appeal in metaphor and imagery, sometimes daydreaming. The possible (future) pulls the imagination of the intuitive. The intuitive head is in the clouds and can be subject to greater error about facts; however the intuitive sometimes finds complex ideas coming to them as a complete whole, unable to explain how he knew. The visions, intuitions or hunches may show up in any realm, e.g., technology, sciences, mathematics, philosophy, the arts, or one's social life. The person who had a natural preference for intuition would describe her/himself as innovative.

### **Sources of misunderstanding:**

The differences between sensation and intuition creates the widest gulf between people of any of the differences in temperament. The sensible is understood in terms of happiness/sadness and

optimism/pessimism. The intuitive is understood in terms of sensitivity/insensitivity and awareness/unawareness.

**Example:** A sensible would hire someone because they have experience doing the job needed. An intuitive would hire the person they “believe” could do the job best.

The difference between intuitive and sensible is most noticeable in their attitude about child rearing. The intuitive parent wants the child to daydream and be interested in fanciful tales and myths; they want the child to have a vivid imagination. In contrast, the sensible parent becomes concerned if the child is not useful. They believe the child should spend much of the time outdoors playing, practicing and when older - working.

#### **Sensing**

Experience  
Past  
Realistic  
Perspiration  
Actual  
Down-to-earth  
Utility  
Fact  
Practicality  
Sensible

#### **Intuitive**

Hunches  
Future  
Speculative  
Inspiration  
Possible  
Head-in-clouds  
Fantasy  
Fiction  
Ingenuity  
Imaginative

### **3. THINKING (T) VS. FEELING (F)**

Thinking persons choose the impersonal basis of choice, reporting that they prefer making decisions on principles: logically and objectively. The Thinking preference is 50% of the population. Persons who choose the personal basis are called feeling.

More men than women (6 out of 10), are Thinking. This is the only preference which shows a gender bias. The thinking preference people claim the feeling preference people are “too soft hearted, illogical, fuzzy thinkers and too emotional.” On the other hand, the feeling people claim at times that thinking preference people are “heartless and have ice in their veins.”

Misunderstandings can occur when feeling and thinking people are expected to make a decision in an unnatural way. For example, when a feeling wife insists that her thinking husband “let his feelings show,” he might retort, “be logical for once.” Yet, neither way of going about making decisions deserves denigration from those with opposing preference. But studies show it is easier for the feeling people to become thinking than the reverse.

Both types can react emotionally with the same intensity. The feeling person, however, tends to make emotional reactions more visible, and others may see them as warmer and capable of deeper feelings.

When the feeling type becomes emotional they tend to affect others (their temperature rises and those around them have an increase in temperature). When the thinking person becomes emotional the body reactions are not as evident. The thinking person may be experiencing as much intense emotion, but they seem embarrassed by a show of intense emotions. The feeling person seems to enjoy the emotion, and can overreact.

The feeling type needs the sensing type to present another point of view and perhaps fill in missed details. Once the feeling type begins to believe that the thinking type does have emotions, they are able to work together better.

**Thinking**

Objective  
Principles  
Policy  
Laws  
Criterion  
Firmness  
Impersonal  
Justice  
Categories  
Standards  
Critique  
Analysis  
Allocation

**Feeling**

Subjective  
Values  
Social values  
Extenuating circumstances  
Intimacy  
Persuasion  
Personal  
Humane  
Harmony  
Good or Bad  
Appreciate  
Sympathy  
Devotion

**4. JUDGING (MONOCHRONIC) (J) VS. PERCEIVING (POLYCHRONIC) (P)**

Do I prefer closure and the settling of things or do I prefer to keep options open?

Persons who choose closure over options are the judging types. Judgers tend to set deadlines and take them seriously. Judging people are more likely to be judgmental and perceivers are more likely to be perceptive, but the big difference is in their comfort with deadlines.

The Judgers – regardless of their previous pair preferences – all share an attitude toward work and play that is quite different from that of the Perceivers. The judging types seem to have a work ethic that dictates that work comes before everything else. For instance, one’s work must be done before rest or play. This outlook is everywhere in their lives. They will do all the preparation, maintenance, and cleaning up just because these are necessary.

The Perceivers seem to be more playful and less serious. The work does not have to be done before play or rest begins. They are very insistent that what they do be fun for them - at work, home or school.

P’s and J’s often criticize each other, but a successful team would have representatives who are both judgers and perceivers.

**Judgers (50% of the population)**

Settled  
Decided  
Fixed  
Plan ahead  
Run one’s life  
Closure  
Planned  
Completed  
Decisive  
Wrap it up  
Urgency  
Deadline!  
Get show on the road

**Perceivers (the other 50%)**

Pending  
Gather more data  
Flexible  
Adapt as you go  
Let it happen  
Treasure hunting  
Open ended  
Emergent  
Tentative  
Something will turn up  
There’s plenty of time  
What deadline?  
Let’s wait and see