

Activity – Communication Style self-assessment

What's Your Style?

Consider each of the following questions separately and circle the *one* letter (a, b, c, or d) 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.

After scoring your responses, 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.

Self- evaluation questionnaire

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 customer or co-worker ...**
 - 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 co-worker or customer ...**
 - 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 about personal things, the weather, and so on.
 - d. I try to keep the conversation as brief as possible.

- 6. If a co-worker is upset ...**
 - a. I ask if I can do anything to help.
 - b. I leave him alone because I don't want to intrude on his privacy.
 - c. I try to cheer him up and help him to see the bright side.
 - d. I feel uncomfortable and hope he gets 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 customer is explaining a problem to me ...**
 - a. I try to understand and empathize with how she is 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 her 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 customers or co-workers ...**
 - 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 apologize 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 customers or co-Workers 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 customer or a co-worker ...**
- a. I tell her to stop it.
 - b. I feel hurt but usually don't say anything about it to her.
 - c. I ignore her anger and try to focus on the facts of the situation.
 - d. I let her know in strong terms that I don't like her behaviour.
- 18. When I see a co-worker or customer whom I like and haven't seen recently ...**
- a. I give him a friendly hug.
 - b. I greet him but don't shake his hand.
 - c. I give him a firm but quick handshake.
 - d. I give him an enthusiastic handshake that lasts a few moments.

Scoring the questionnaire

Once you have finished the questionnaire, review the following scoring sheet (shown on the next page). You will be scoring yourself on four specific working styles. They are:

- Driver (DR)
- Expressive (EX)
- Amiable (AM)
- Analytical (A)

Transfer your answers from the questionnaire to the scoring sheet and then count up the number of times you circled each style. Enter these scores at the bottom of the scoring sheet. The style where you scored the most points is your primary working style.

The four terms (Driver, Expressive, Amiable, and Analytical) 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

Scoring Form

1 a Driver b Amiable c Analytical d Expressive	7 a Analytical b Driver c Expressive d Amiable	13 a Analytical b Expressive c Driver d Amiable
2 a Analytical b Driver c Amiable d Expressive	8 a Expressive b Analytical c Amiable d Driver	14 a Analytical b Expressive c Amiable d Driver
3 a Amiable b Expressive c Analytical d Driver	9 a Amiable b Analytical c Driver d Expressive	15 a Expressive b Amiable c Analytical d Driver
4 a Expressive b Amiable c Analytical d Driver	10 a Driver b Amiable c Expressive d Analytical	16 a Analytical b Driver c Amiable d Expressive
5 a Driver b Expressive c Amiable d Analytical	11 a Amiable b Driver c Expressive d Analytical	17 a Driver b Amiable c Analytical d Expressive
6 a Amiable b Analytical c Expressive d Driver	12 a Analytical b Amiable c Driver d Expressive	18 a Amiable b Analytical c Driver d Expressive

Total Driver Score _____

Total Amiable Score _____

Total Analytical Score _____

Total Expressive Score _____

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

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 sulky at times. If he or she seems 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. His or her pleasure is accuracy. Pain is to be wrong and criticized.

- 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
- Recognize 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.

Portrait of an Analytical's office

The first thing you notice will probably be the glasses. The Analytical will have worn out his or her eyes from constantly reading everything. On the wall you may see a framed degree, but the chief decoration will be charts, figures, and graphs of every kind. The analytical is not very friendly, will often greet you skeptically, and doesn't want to share much – especially anything personal. There will be no flowers or plant; for the Analytical, they belong in greenhouses. On the desk will be only business-related information, and that will be carefully arranged. It's not a power office, but it definitely will be functional. As for color, black and white will do nicely.

Symbol: Owl.

The Amiable

Devoted, consistent, dependable, and loyal, the Amiable is a hard worker and will persevere long after others have given up. He or she is 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. He or she enjoys company, performs best in a stable environment, and often has a stabilizing 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. His or her 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 him or her as a team player; Be a good listener

Portrait of an Amiable's office

The first thing you will notice will be pictures of loved ones on the desk: husband, wife, family, favorite pets. They'll be in a candid style, and the Amiable loves to talk about them. On the walls will be colorful photos of landscapes, waterfalls, birds, and sunsets. You'll find flowers or plants that are growing well and office colors that are harmonious and restful. The person will almost certainly be dressed in colors that match. Furniture will be fashionable, but not overwhelming. Files are present, but usually kept out of the way. If you're a little late, the Amiable won't mind. If you have the Amiable in your company, he or she will stay with you. The Amiable likes company, newsletters, picnics, gatherings, and retirement parties.

Symbol: Dove.

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, organized, 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 his or her 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. He or she can also be demanding, opinionated, controlling, and uncompromising – or even overbearing, cold, and harsh.

The Driver's pleasure is power, control, and respect. His or her 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 his way
- Fears giving up control.
- Often extroverted but do not show emotions

When communicating with a Driver:

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

Portrait of a Driver's office

Of course, it must be the corner office with two windows, but the Driver never looks at the view. Pictures on the wall are of battlefields, maps, and boats. The Driver is a multi-tasked person and can sign letters, hold interviews, and talk on the phone simultaneously. Office furniture contributes to the impression of power and control, and is the most expensive and incredible available.

The office may also contain flowers and plants, even exotic ones like orchids (carefully chose to contribute to the impression of power), but the Driver never looks after them. There's an assistant to do that. On the desk are often family portraits, but never candid shots. They are formal portraits showing everyone in his or her proper role, frozen forever as the Driver sees them.

The office will probably be decorated by an interior designer to create the feeling of power, and the colors of the office will be strong power colors. Curt and tough, straight to business. That's the Driver at work in his or her den. Don't waste time. Get straight to the point!

Symbol: Eagle.

The Expressive

The Expressive, a verbally adept personality, is engaging, accommodating, supportive of others, persuasive, socially adept, and relationship- rather than task-oriented. He or she loves to be one of the gang, and is 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 generalize, verbal assaults, and sometimes irrational behavior. The Expressive can also be egotistical, manipulative, undisciplined, reactive, unorganized, and abrasive.

The Expressive readily exchanges information and life experiences. His or her main need is to be appreciated and accepted. The Expressive's pleasure is recognition and approval. His or her 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 his or her 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 minimize his or her direct involvement with details or personal conflicts.

Portrait of an Expressive's office

In short, it's a mess. The Expressive loves favorite sayings and has them plastered on the wall or sitting on the desk. Files are never in a filing cabinet. Rather, they're piled all over the office in stacks. But don't be misled. The Expressive knows exactly where everything is and can find virtually anything by its location. Office colors will probably be loud and lively. If there are flowers or plants, they're likely dead – either talked to death or lacking water. The Expressive's greatest reward is personal acknowledgment from others, and examples of this will be displayed. The Expressive is an excitable dreamer, with lots of ideas and projects, but without the time to follow them up.

Symbol: Peacock.

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.
- ◆ Emphasize the practicality of your ideas.
- ◆ Use visual aids.

Communicating with a Process/Analytical oriented person:

- ◆ Be precise; state the facts.
- ◆ Organize 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 he or she goes 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.
- ◆ Emphasize 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.