

## MBTI® LANGUAGE GUIDELINES

### A. Jung's Theory

When referring to Jung's theory, use the terms, spelling, and capitalization style used in Jung's original works. Examples are as follows:

#### CORRECT USAGE

Sensation  
Judgment  
Perception

#### INCORRECT USAGE

Sensing  
Judging  
Perceiving

### B. MBTI® Terminology

#### 1. "Dichotomy" and "Scale"

- a. Dichotomy--The term *dichotomy* is used when referring to one of the four type constructs of the MBTI® instrument: Extraversion—Introversion, Sensing—Intuition, Thinking—Feeling, or Judging—Perceiving. This term is preferred to the term *dimension* in keeping with Jung's theory, which specified the dichotomous nature of type constructs, described as bipolar opposites. Referring to the four pairs of opposites as dichotomies is an accurate reflection of the theory underlying the MBTI instrument. The term is also meant to discourage any assumptions that type constructs reflect a continuum such as is assumed in trait-based systems.

**Example:** The MBTI® instrument describes four dichotomies, each made up of a pair of opposite preferences. (*correct usage*)

- b. Scale—Use of the term *scale* is limited to discussion of the psychometrics of the instrument as opposed to the theory or interpretation.

**Example:** The T-F scale correlated significantly with... (*correct usage*)

#### 2. "Preference"

- a. Eight Preference Terms-- The preferences are the following (note that these terms are always capitalized when used to denote the names of the preferences):

Extraversion	Introversion
Sensing	Intuition
Thinking	Feeling
<sup>1</sup> Judging	Perceiving

b. Capitalization--In some cases, according to usage, the cap style for MBTI terms will vary. Examples are:

- She extraverts her Thinking.
- She prefers Extraverted Thinking.
- The judging functions are Thinking and Feeling
- The perceiving functions are Sensing and Intuition
- She prefers Judging to Perceiving

c. Single Term Usage--*Preference* refers to **one** of the choices of the dichotomy—for example, “a preference for Thinking or Feeling” is a correct usage. “The T-F preference” is an *incorrect* usage.

d. Punctuation Use with the Preferences

- When putting any of the preferences together (other than those that are part of a dichotomy), run the letters together; do not use a dash, hyphen, or blank sign—for example, NTs, ESJs (not ES\_Js). Note that an exception can be made for some tables (and corresponding text). For example, in tables that show correlations of letters, the use of the blank sign is acceptable.
- Use an en dash (“-“) when the two preferences of a dichotomy are spelled out (the Thinking-Feeling dichotomy, but an open compound when preferences from different dichotomies are combined as adjectives (an Introverted Thinking type).
- Also use an en dash for the abbreviated version of the dichotomies.

**Examples:** E-I, S-N, T-F, J-P (*correct usage*)  
EI, SN, TF, JP (*incorrect usage*)

e. Preference Combinations

To avoid confusion about whether a preference pair refers to the dynamics of the combination or to a single combination of preferences, the following conventions are used:

- When identifying the dynamic combinations, use the term *dominant*, lowercase the term *extraverted* or *introverted*, and uppercase the function.

**Examples:**

-dominant extraverted Thinking (*correct usage*)  
-dominant introverted Sensing (*correct usage*)

- When referring indiscriminately to any attitude function combination, use the normal convention of any two preferences (that is, cap both):

**Examples:**

- Extraverted Thinking (*correct usage*)
- Introverted Sensing (*correct usage*)

f. Clarity--Avoid contradictory and ambiguous uses of the term preference by using existing terminology more precisely and offering generic explanations.

- Meaning 1: The act of preferring or the state of being preferred.

**Examples:** -She has a preference for Introversion. (*correct usage*)  
-She has an Introversion preference. (*correct usage*)

- Meaning 2: The opposites of the dichotomy (Use generic or commonsense descriptions such as the alternative, opposite, option, or a choice of a dichotomy to indicate a choice that exists before a preference has been exercised.)

**Example:** The MBTI® items require forced choices between the alternatives of the dichotomy at issue. (*correct usage*)

- Meaning 3: The underlying construct of an alternative of a dichotomy, i.e., the functions or attitudes that make up the dichotomy.

**Example:** Every person is assumed to use both alternatives of each of the four dichotomies but to respond first, most often, and most comfortably with the preferred functions or attitudes. (*correct usage*)

g. Multifaceted Use--In specific situations where the “multifaceted aspect of a preference needs to be conveyed, generic words such as *domain*, *sphere*, and *category* can be used.

**Example:** Each alternative of the dichotomy represents a multifaceted domain of psychological functioning. (*correct usage*)

Note: The term *domain* also has a specific meaning in discussing measurement, which refers to a large area or population from which you may want to sample facets.

**Example:** To maintain the essence and meaning of the preference constructs, it was essential to engage in representative sampling of the construct domains. (*correct usage*)

3. “Preference Clarity Index”

a. Updated Term--Use the term *preference clarity index* in place of the previous term *preference score*.

**Examples:**

- The preference clarity index for each of the preference scales will go from 0 to 30 in each direction.
- The characteristics associated with a preference may be (but are not necessarily) less apparent when a low preference clarity index is associated with a preference.

- b. Score--The terms *preference clarity index* and *preference score* are equivalent. Do not use the phrase “on the preference clarity index” which implies that there is something else that is the number on the index, e.g., a score. The index *is* the score.

**Examples:**

-A person with a preference clarity index for Thinking of T23 could be said to be more clear in this preference than a person with a preference clarity index for Thinking of T9. (*correct usage*)

-A person with a T23 on the preference clarity index... (*incorrect usage*)

-In the extremely rare event that someone’s preference clarity index is exactly 0, he or she would be assigned an I, N, F or P. (*correct usage*)

-In the extremely rare event that someone received an exact 0 on the preference clarity index... (*incorrect usage*)

- c. Abbreviation—The abbreviation *pci* can be used in place of the full term, especially in the case of repetition. Always state the full term on first use, followed by the abbreviation in parentheses.

**Examples (correct usage):**

-As helpful evidence regarding the likelihood that a preference has been accurately reported, MBTI® results include an indication of clarity of preference obtained from the respondent’s theta score and termed a preference clarity index (*pci*).

-If the items were not weighted, then the *pci* would be a simple percentage of the number of items answered.

-The characteristics associated with a preference may be less apparent when a low *pci* is associated with a preference. A low *pci* results from almost equal votes for each opposite pair in a dichotomy.

-In such a system, a *pci* of 50 would mean that the person achieved a *pci* that was 50% of the maximum possible (this is a *pci* of 15 using the 0-30 scale).

- d. Shortened Form—The shortened form *index* can be used in some cases, usually where the term *score* was formerly used.

**Examples (correct usage):**

-The preference clarity index is thus a ratio showing how consistently the person answered the questions on a particular scale compared to the maximum possible

index that would be achievable on that scale by answering all of the items in the keyed direction.

-The higher the index, the greater the clarity of preference that can be assumed.

e. Pluralizing Abbreviated & Shortened Forms

- Abbreviated Form: Do not use the abbreviation in the plural form; spell out the full term.

**Examples:**

-This puts all of the preference clarity indexes on a 0 to 30 scale. (*correct usage*)

-This puts all of the pcis on a... (*incorrect usage*)

- Shortened Form--You may use the term *indexes* for an acceptable plural form. However, the term *indices* is not acceptable.

**Examples:**

-This puts all of the indexes on a 0 to 30 scale. (*correct usage*)

-This puts all of the indices on a 0 to 30 scale. (*incorrect usage*)

**C. Avoidance of MBTI® Jargon and Misrepresentation of MBTI® Theory**

1. Expression of terms—Always express terms in such a way as to convey that:

- a. We are talking about *preferences* and *not* hard-and-fast categories

**Example:** “People who prefer Feeling” is the correct way of stating the underlying concept. (*correct usage*)

- b. We are referring to the specific usage of terms based on Jungian/MBTI® theory, as opposed to the common usage. For example, the term *Thinkers* may convey an impression that people with a Feeling preference do not also think.

**Examples:**

**CORRECT USAGE**

Feeling types  
Thinking types  
Intuitive types  
Sensing types  
Judging types  
Perceiving types  
Extraverted types  
Introverted types  
Extraverts

**INCORRECT USAGE**

Feelers  
Thinkers  
Intuitives  
Sensors  
Judgers  
Perceivers  
  
Extroverts

Introverts	
Perceiving functions	perceptive functions
Using Intuition	intuiting

2. Adjective Use—Use the terms *dominant*, *auxiliary*, *tertiary*, and *inferior* as adjectives—rather than nouns.

**Example:** The auxiliary function is helpful. (correct usage)  
The auxiliary is helpful. (incorrect usage)

3. Abbreviations--As a general rule, do not use a single letter in text to abbreviate a preference. For example, rather than “Ns prefer to...,” say instead, “Intuitive types prefer to...” Two, three, or four letter combinations are acceptable. “NTs, ISJs, and INTPs were found to...”
4. Clarity of Preference--Use the phrase *clarity of preference* rather than *strength of preference*.
5. Trait Language--Avoid all trait language—that is, any language that implicitly or explicitly refers to an “amount” or “degree” of a preference, such as *very intuitive*.
6. Template Scoring—The term *template scoring* is now used in place of *hand scoring*.

#### **D. Instrument Name**

1. Adjective Use--Always use the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® and MBTI® brand names as adjectives followed by the “®” symbol, per trademark/copyright guidelines. For example, “The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®) personality inventory....”
2. “Test” Terminology—It is not acceptable to refer to the MBTI® instrument as a “test.” The terms “*personality inventory*,” “*instrument*,” and “*assessment tool*,” and “assessment” are acceptable.
3. Abbreviations—Both “*MBTI® instrument*” and “*the Indicator*” can be used when shortening the instrument name. But spell out on first usage in the chapter, and keep in mind point 1 in this section.

#### **Cautionary Note**

These recommendations represent more of an *approach* to the language than hard-and-fast rules. Authors should be allowed the freedom to choose the precise language needed to convey an exact meaning in a particular instance, but they must be consistent in their use of terminology and must not sacrifice clarity. This caveat also applies to using terms that have the same meaning, such as subscales/components, attitudes/orientations,

functions/processes. For example: “Scores in the midrange on the various subscales may reflect the comfortable use of both poles of the *component*, depending on circumstances.” The reader may wonder, “Is a component something different from a subscale?” Avoid indiscriminately seesawing between terms in the same sentence or paragraph. If different terms are used within a chapter or publication, an explanation should be given.

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