

# Personality Tests: A Catalyst for Improving Online Class Participation

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Reed (2020) noted, “Some professors argued, correctly, that it’s disheartening in Zoom to talk to a bunch of black boxes with names in them” (para. 3). Although my presentation does not focus on Zoom’s flaws and merits, I mentioned Reed’s remark to illustrate online classrooms’ potential for anonymity. How can we transform those “black boxes with names in them” into students we know and students who are willing actively participate with insightful comments and questions? In this presentation, I argue that the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®) serves as a tool for improving class participation through building community and employing students’ strengths and interests in their online classroom engagement. The first set of instructions serves as a guide for completing MBTI®, and the second set of instructions outlines ways to use MBTI® in an online classroom to build community and improve participation.

## Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI®) Test Taking Instructions

1. Visit *Truity’s* website [www.truity.com/test/type-finder-personality-test-new](http://www.truity.com/test/type-finder-personality-test-new) to take the test for free. Although many personality tests exist, for the purposes of my presentation, I focus only on MBTI®. Other personality tests or other versions of MBTI® located on various websites may also be used to improve classroom participation.
2. Complete *Truity’s* MBTI® test by marking each statement as “inaccurate,” “neutral,” or “accurate.” (estimated completion time: 15 minutes)
3. After completing the test, view the four-letter code. The personality types denoted through the four-letter code represent the “four key dimensions that could be used to categorize people”: “Introversion [I] vs. Extraversion [E],” “Sensing [S] vs. Intuition [N],” “Thinking [T] vs. Feeling [F],” and “Judging [J] vs. Perceiving [P]” (Myers & Briggs’ 16 Personality Types,” 2020). Visit [www.truity.com/page/16-personality-types-myers-briggs](http://www.truity.com/page/16-personality-types-myers-briggs) for definitions of the four dimensions and descriptions of each four-letter personality type.

## Utilizing MBTI® to Improve Participation

A quick Google search reveals flaws in MBTI® as well as other personality tests. My utilization of MBTI® does not depend on accuracy. Instead I employ MBTI® for improving participation in the following ways: 1. Eliminating anonymity by getting to know my students and allowing classmates to become acquainted with each other 2. Utilizing MBTI® for recognizing students’ strengths and employing those strengths in their participation 3. Using MBTI® to develop course activities and assignments relevant to students’ personal interests. The three activities below illustrate the three approaches to improving participation.

### *MBTI® as an Icebreaker*

On the first days of class, instructors often gather writing samples and employ “getting to know you” activities. During many introductory activities instructors and classmates learn information such as students’ names, majors, goals for this course, and in some cases, a personal tidbit about their hobbies or identities. However, MBTI® aids instructors and classmates in getting to know each other on a deeper level.

In this simple icebreaker activity, students review their personality descriptions on *Truity’s* website [www.truity.com/page/16-personality-types-myers-briggs](http://www.truity.com/page/16-personality-types-myers-briggs) and visit *verywellmind* at [www.verywellmind.com/the-myers-briggs-type-indicator-2795583](http://www.verywellmind.com/the-myers-briggs-type-indicator-2795583) . On *verywellmind*, students will click on

their four-letter personality type to read about strengths, weaknesses, personal relationships, career paths, and interaction tips.

After reviewing the information above related to their personality type, students create a journal entry/writing sample to be shared with the class in response to the following questions: Overall, do you think that the personality description *verywellmind* provides for your personality type is accurate? In what ways is it accurate or inaccurate? Include personal experiences that support or counter *verywellmind*'s specific descriptions. For example, a person with an ISTJ personality type may counter or support the following statement: "ISTJs make decisions based on logic and objective data rather than personal feelings" (Cherry, 2020).

Through this activity, students articulate their personal experiences and often reveal information about how they communicate, think, plan, organize, and make decisions. Students employ examples from their life as students, parents, employees, sports enthusiasts, military service members, etc. in their responses. After sharing their responses, instructors and classmates make connections as they see many similarities and differences while breaking down the anonymity of online classes.

### ***Employing Students' Strengths in Participation***

On *verywellmind* at [www.verywellmind.com/the-myers-briggs-type-indicator-2795583](http://www.verywellmind.com/the-myers-briggs-type-indicator-2795583), each personality type has a one-word description beside of the link that contains an in-depth description. For instance, "The Persuader" appears beside of ESTP while "The Inspector" aligns with ISTJ. Some of the one-word descriptions have similar meanings (e.g., ENTP's "The Debater" and ESTP's "The Persuader") (Cherry, 2020). For group activities taking place near the beginning of the semester, I ask students to consider assigning group roles based on their personality types. For example, all students take part in composing a group response. However, the persuader of the group (ESTP) ensures the document has persuasive points and avoids logical fallacies. The inspector of the group (ISTJ) may proofread the document. These are just a few examples of roles based on personality types. While these roles should never be forced upon students, MBTI® provides an opportunity for students to thoughtfully choose their roles and showcase their expertise through participation. During group work, each personality type brings forth valuable contributions. Students enjoy participating when they apply their strengths and see themselves as experts.

### ***Utilizing MBTI® to Develop Assignments Relevant to Students' Interests***

As a test often used in universities as a guide for career selection based on personality type, MBTI's® connection to careers provides fertile ground for FYW instructors to link course assignments with students' interests. For instance, a podcast script or paper on problems practicing professionals encounter in a student's chosen profession allows students to engage with materials and people relevant to their profession. Such projects centered on their interests encourage participation.

## References

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