

Personality and Career Assessment Guidelines:

Many people like to take shortcuts. Shortcuts, that is, to finding out who they are and what they should be do with the rest of their life. Hence the popularity of interactive tests that are increasingly coming onto the Internet, mostly for free. If you like such tests then you may enjoy this collection - and perhaps find some helpful clues about future directions for your life and your work.

Now to the tests. Interactive tests online divide into two categories: Personality tests, and career or vocational tests - though sometimes the line between them gets a little hazy. We will look at each category, in turn.

These *instruments*, particularly the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), are loved by many career counselors. Incidentally, "Type" means "what kind of personality do you have?" - not "was this set in Courier or Palatino?" Anyhoo, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is not on the Internet. But three other tests, quizzes or 'sorters,' dealing with "Personality type" are.

Guideline and Rules about Taking Career Tests:

There is no one test that everyone loves.

To begin with, some people hate all tests. Period. End of story. Forcing these tests on your best friend (if they feel this way) could lead to your premature demise.

Other people like tests, but hate particular kinds of questions. For example, some people dislike "forced-choice questions," where they must pick between two choices that are equally bad, in their view. Other people dislike "ranking yourself against others" questions, because, with their low self-esteem, they rank themselves poorly in comparison with "others" in almost everything. Other people don't like "pick occupations you like" questions, because they've learned by experience that all occupations, as commonly practiced, are a mixture of good and bad, and they keep thinking of the bad stuff, when each occupation is mentioned. Other people don't like questions about how they would behave in certain situations, because they tend to pick how they wish they would behave, rather than how in fact they actually do.

Hence, the *form* of a test has to feel right to the individual who is taking it. With tests, as with so many other things in life, "one man's meat is another man's poison."

There is no one test that always gives better results than others.

You may take a test that gives wonderful suggestions for future careers, but when your best friend takes the same test, their results may be way off the mark - and you are dismayed. Tests have personality - and with respect to a given test, one person will love its look, feel, taste, and touch, while another person will hate it on sight. And, unfortunately, how one feels about a test will definitely skew your results.

No test should necessarily be assumed to be accurate

We turn to tests with the hope that someone can definitely tell us who we are and what we should do; and we think a test will do that. No, no, no. You can't say, "Well this must be who I am; the test says so." Test results are sometimes way off the mark. On many online (and offline) tests, if you answer even two questions inaccurately, you will get completely wrong results and recommendations. I know countless sad stories about people whose lives were sent down a completely wrong path by test 'results' that they believed when they shouldn't have. You should take all test results with not just a grain of salt, but with a barrel. Tests have one great mission and purpose: To give you ideas you hadn't thought of, and suggestions worth following up. But if you ask them to do more than that, you're asking too much.

You should take several tests, rather than just one.

You will get a much better picture of your preferences, profile, and good career suggestions from three or more tests, rather than just one. It's the old idea, since at least the time of the Second World War of 'triangulating' the source of a transmission. You need to 'triangulate' your test "profiles," in order to find your true self.

Always let your intuition be your guide.

You know more about yourself than any test does. Treat no test outcome as 'gospel'; reject the summary the test gives you, if it just seems dead wrong to you. Trust your intuition. On the other hand, if you really like the suggestions a test gives you, don't agonize about whether those suggestions are worth tracking down - just do it. Always listen to your heart.

Don't let tests make you forget that you are absolutely unique on the face of the earth - as your fingerprints attest.

There is a sense in which all tests tend toward one unvarying result: Because they deal in categories, they don't really tell you what's unique about you, but rather they tend to end up saying "you are an ENFP," or "you are an AES," or you are a "Blue." It's 'a category they're talking about, but I like to think of it as a 'tribe, - you are lumped with a lot of other people - and sometimes it is even the wrong tribe.

Job expert Clara Horvath puts it well: Career counseling at its best - person to person, face to face - treats you not as a member of some category or 'tribe' but as a unique job seeker, seeking to conduct a unique job hunt, by identifying a unique career and then connecting with a unique company or organization, that you can uniquely help or serve.

You are never finished with a test until you've done some good hard thinking about yourself.

Tests are fun, but just reading the results isn't enough. You're not done until you've thought hard about what distinguishes you from every other member of the human race, and makes you (like your fingerprints) unique. With *that* knowledge, you can then set out to find the work you were uniquely put here on earth to do, i.e., your unique mission in life. Without that hard thinking, tests become just "a flytrap for the lazy."