

Portrait of an INTP:

INTPs exhibit the greatest precision in thought and language of all the types; they tend to see distinctions and inconsistencies in thought and language instantaneously. The one word which captures the unique style of INTPs is architect-the architect of ideas and systems as well as the architect of edifices. This type is found in only 1 percent of the population and therefore is not encountered as frequently as some of the other types. INTPs detect contradictions in statements no matter how distant in space or time the contradictory statements were produced. The intellectual scanning of INTPs has a principled quality; that is, INTPs search for whatever is relevant and pertinent to the issue at hand. Consequently, INTPs can concentrate better than any other type. Authority derived from office, position, or wide acceptance does not impress INTPs. Only statements that are logical and coherent carry weight. External authority per se is irrelevant.

INTPs abhor redundancy and incoherence. Possessing a desire to understand the universe, an INTP is constantly looking for natural law. Curiosity concerning these keys to the universe is a driving force in this type. INTPs prize intelligence in themselves and in others, but can become intellectual dilettantes as a result of their need to amass ideas, principles, or understanding of behavior. And once they know something, it is remembered. INTPs can become obsessed with analysis. Once caught up in a thought process, that thought process seems to have a will of its own for INTPs, and they persevere until the issue is comprehended in all its complexity. They can be intellectual snobs and may show impatience at times with others less endowed intellectually. This quality, INTPs find, generates hostility and defensive behaviors on the part of others, who may describe an INTP as arrogant.

For INTPs, the world exists primarily to be understood. Reality is trivial, a mere arena for proving ideas. It is essential that the universe is understood and that whatever is stated about the universe is stated correctly, with coherence and without redundancy. This is the INTP's final purpose. It matters not whether others understand or accept his or her truths.

Career

The INTP is the logician, the mathematician, the philosopher, the scientist; any pursuit requiring architecture of ideas intrigues this type. INTPs should not, however, be asked to work out the implementation or application of their models to the real world. The INTP is the architect of a system and leaves it to others to be the builder and the applicator. Very often, therefore, the INTP's work is not credited to him or her. The builder and the applier gains fame and fortune, while the INTP's name remains obscure. Appreciation of an INTP's theoretical work frequently comes posthumously-or the work may never be removed from library shelves at all and thus lost.

INTPs tend not to be writers or to go into sales work. They are, however, often excellent teachers, particularly for advanced students, although INTPs do not always enjoy much popularity, for they can be hard taskmasters. They are not good at clerical tasks and are impatient with routine details. They prefer to work quietly, without interruption, and often alone. If an organization is to use the talents of an INTP appropriately, the INTP must be given an efficient support staff who can capture ideas as they emerge and before the INTP loses interest and turns to another idea.

INTPs take their mating relationship seriously and usually are faithful and devoted-albeit preoccupied at times. They are not likely to welcome constant social activity or disorganization in the home. In all probability, the mate of an INTP will initiate and manage the social life. If left to his or her own devices, the INTP mate will retreat into the world of books and emerge only when physical needs become imperative. INTPs are, however, willing, compliant, and easy to live with, although somewhat forgetful of appointments, anniversaries, and the rituals of daily living-unless reminded. They may have difficulty expressing their emotions verbally, and the mate of an INTP may believe that he/she is somewhat taken for granted. As a parent, the INTP is devoted; they enjoy children, and are serious about their upbringing. The home of an INTP parent is usually calm, low-key in discipline, but well run and ordered.

INTPs deal with the environment primarily through intuition, and their strongest quality, the thinking function, remains relatively hidden except in close associations. Therefore, INTPs are often misunderstood, seen as difficult to know, and seldom perceived at their true level of competency. They are inclined to be shy except when with close friends, and their reserve is difficult to penetrate. They are very adaptable until one of their principles is violated. Then INTPs are not adaptable at all! They may have difficulty in being understood by others because they tend to think in a complicated fashion and want to be precise, never redundant in their communications. Because their feeling qualities may be underdeveloped, they may be insensitive to the wants and wishes of others, often quite unaware of the existence of these wants and wishes.