

Second time around



Giving feedback on MBTI Step II results

*Type Tips with
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While the principles of MBTI feedback are the same irrespective of the form used, the guidelines for Step II feedback differ from the other forms in important ways.

As with other MBTI forms, many people complete Step II without ever receiving appropriate feedback, even in basic terms. The minimum requirement is a structured discussion in which the Step II results are explained—in particular, the subscales and type dynamics—with an opportunity to validate the results.

This article combines basic principles of feedback with some crucial requirements for effective Step II feedback.

**Feedback is the bridge
from general information
to genuine understanding**

Step II in MBTI terms is literally one step up psychometrically from the basic Form M or Form G four-letter code results. It refers to a scoring system that enables the different types of questions

within each preference to be identified in terms of subscales or facets. The Step II Forms (K and Q) use different scoring approaches to come up with what is essentially the same underpinning structure., presented in an Expanded Interpretive Report (EIR).

From discussions with many people who have completed Form K or Q and received a Step II, it appears that feedback of any sort may be less likely with an Expanded Interpretive Report (EIR) than with a Form M or G.

The EIR provides a lot of data, and is a comprehensive-looking handout, often it simply handed to the person concerned. Sometimes the EIR is provided as part of a course that has some other purpose, and a computer-generated personality report seems to fit in with the process.

This can be very misleading and counter-productive, particularly if the person has little idea of the many differences between the MBTI and other personality frameworks. A key issue here is that the person may take their results literally and accept or reject them on that basis.

Feedback is the bridge from a cursory reading of general information to a genuine understanding of the concepts involved and explained.

The point of feedback, of course, is *not* to validate MBTI results, but to ask the person ‘who are you?’, in the context of psychological type. That context gives them a basis for some self-understanding, and a standpoint from which they can use type to advantage.

This is particularly important with Step II, because people can be overwhelmed by its data and be unable to make relevant sense of its important information.

Effective Step II interpretation involves both the person completing the form and you as the qualified practitioner.

Knowledge and understanding of Step II results is more likely to come from *you* the person giving feedback, than from any report. In addition to your technical knowledge, an important part of feedback is your *self-knowledge*. You need to know about type dynamics not only at a basic feedback level at the very least, but also something about how dynamics fits in with the EIR subscales.

If the person is unsure whether they're an INFJ or INFP, say, type dynamics is important in discriminating between the two. In Step II terms, they may be something like a 'casual' INFJ or a 'scheduled' INFP, and it's important to understand the difference and know what it means.

So, MBTI practitioners giving feedback need to know their own type dynamics and any Step II nuances, so that they can understand the process and explain it in layman's terms. Discussion points and exercises for each subscale should be at hand or established through seeing how subscale results fit in with the person's life and behaviour.

The following guidelines have been arrived at through research and experience. They parallel closely the actual recommendations of the EIR developers. What follows presumes some familiarity

with Step II constructs and terms such as polarity index, out-of-pattern scores and so on,

Feedback guidelines

1. 90 minutes is the minimum time for Step II feedback

My experience is that you need at least 90 minutes to give people an opportunity to talk about themselves in the context of type. I usually allow more than two hours: sometimes half a day, which gives time for space and reflection.

For a group process, a minimum of half a day is recommended—more if various exercises are required and included.

2. Step II should *not* be the introduction to the MBTI

People getting feedback on Step II results should already be aware of their MBTI preferences from an earlier session. This basic feedback must include something about type dynamics and development.

If the Step II form is the first MBTI form the person has completed, then the basic results should be presented at a separate session for discussion and verification. You can hand-score Form K with Form G templates, and Form Q with Form M templates, although the EIR printout in either case gives you these results. The EIR itself should not be given out until the Step II feedback session.

If the person has completed the MBTI before, it can be useful to give specific instructions about completing Step II in terms of what they *really* prefer. You want to avoid having them say to themselves, ‘Well, I know I’m an ENFJ, so I’ll answer all the questions that way.’

For people who already know what type they are, the tendency is that their scores become more and more clear. You actually want to know who they are, in all their complexity, to get a more accurate picture that you can discuss with them. Naomi Quenk’s term ‘nuances’ is relevant here.

3. Step II expresses type, not strength or skill

Step II results indicate how people with the same overall preferences live their lives as individuals. Step II subscales provide descriptions of traits that may be involved, but say nothing about strength or skill.

This point is basic to any MBTI feedback, but it’s more crucial with Step II, because it’s about how people act out their lives. Sometimes regular behaviours don’t work well, but the person likes them anyway. Interpreting the EIR is something like that.

4. Don’t take Step II scores literally

This is true for any MBTI form, but the difficulties are multiplied with Step II because of the way it indicates subscale scores.

These scores, from 1 to 10, are a metric designed to make some order. But the subscales are not all of the same length, nor do they all have the same level of significance.

It’s not recommended to give the person the last page, or even the last three pages, of the EIR, which provides all the score data in a chart format. The chart provides much interesting detail, but the nuances are better left to the practitioner to express in general, not psychometric, terms.

None of the MBTI forms are constructed to measure pathologies, so interpreting scores in that way, e.g., through polarity indexes or mixed/midrange/midzone results, is not only inappropriate, but incorrect. People who come out mid-range, mixed or mid-zone will tell you it’s them, for whatever reason: learned behaviour, lifelong habit, etc.

From all the statistical information provided, it’s also easy to presume a perfect or stereotypical INTJ, for instance: but what has to be taken into account here is that the expression of these preferences is at the level of the individual, not the whole type code to which they belong.

5. Interpret Step II results in the context of type dynamics and type development

Type dynamics is particularly relevant for out-of-pattern results, which give an indication of how the person uses their inferior function in support of their dominant. Even where out-of-pattern scores don’t occur, reference should be continually made to the dynamics that underpin type, so that the person receiving the feedback doesn’t see Step II as just extra detail.

There are a number of ways of ensuring people see where type dynamics fits in. The first is in a general review of those ideas before results are given. I usually add something about Jung’s ideas about the Self, and tailor that depending on the audience or client.

A knowledge of type dynamics is useful for all scales and subscales/facets. Its use for the functions is self-evident, as dominant, auxiliary, tertiary and inferior can all be found there. Out-of-pattern scores, where a person prefers (for example) T overall but F on one subscale, provide an opportunity to discuss how the person got to use that facet of their personality.

When did you start to do that, or take that approach?

How do you think/feel that this subscale preference helps you in your life or work?

Where T is dominant and F is inferior, sometimes an explanation is that the subscale trait developed to protect the dominant. Or it can be related to family, or to training. It can be useful to ask when the trait is used, when it works and when it doesn't work. There can be a variety of answers to this, and it's the person's life experience that tells you.

If T is extraverted and F is introverted, then an out-of-pattern preference may be an expression of introverted feeling. If T is introverted and F extraverted, then it's more likely that the out-of-pattern preference will manifest extraverted feeling.

If the previous example also has T as auxiliary and F as tertiary, there can be questions as to when the tertiary out-of-pattern preference began to be used. Sometimes this is a family-of-origin response, but mostly I've seen it as something that becomes of interest in the late 20s to mid 30s.

With the *attitudes*, things can get interesting. A person reporting introversion, for instance, may also report the context in which that attitude operates. A contained person may report, for example, that that has to do with situations relating to judgments more than perceptions.

An out-of-pattern result for an introvert may have to do with the inferior function, as in 'I like doing this, but it takes a lot of energy.' Similarly, with J and P, it seems that a J out-of-pattern preference for someone who comes out P overall may relate to protecting a dominant.

This may sound overly complex, but the questions you can use to elicit relevant responses can be something like:

In what situations do you find yourself using that preference?

You don't need a rigid list of questions: just genuine curiosity, and the ability to move on when an issue might not be useful to discuss.

6. Jargon is not part of feedback

Any MBTI feedback session should be jargon-free, particularly so for Step II. Various words are defined in the EIR text ('enthusiastic', 'inferential', etc), and they have meaning only in that context. These may not have the same meaning in the client's mind (or in yours, for that matter).

So you may have to explain what "contained" means in terms of Step II. Defining your terms is a common part of interpreting any psychological instrument in any case.

You should not use words such as *scale*, *subscale*, *score*, *mixed*, *midrange*, *mid-zone*, *facet*, *dichotomy*, *dominant* and *function*, even if you have to express the ideas behind them. Plain terms such as *most preferred*, *preference* and *clarity* are preferable, as is comparative language: *tend to*, *may be*, *prefer*, *mostly*, *seem to*.

Never say things such as 'your type does ...' or 'people like you say/act ...' Apart from being inappropriate, you may find that the person to whom you're giving the feedback does not in fact think, do or say the things described in your statement.

The preferences are content-free; life gives us the ways we use them. Cultural expression may be important, for instance.

It's important to remember that when using the EIR—particularly in groups where you have people of the same type who, because of their life experience or

choice, express it differently. The learning from these group experiences can be profound for everyone, often particularly for you as the presenter.

7. Step II doesn't tell everything about a person's personality

Some people (me included) will claim aspects of a subscale preference for which their scores in the opposite direction are very clear. This tells us that the MBTI asks you to choose between opposites, and that 'preference' doesn't mean that you don't do the opposite. But there are also other views.

No matter your knowledge of type, some questions arise that don't seem to be type-related. Knowledge of other sociological, psychological and cultural approaches is an advantage, as is an acknowledgement that the data doesn't seem understandable in the type context, or you don't know, but will find out.

8. Materials

The person receiving Step II feedback must be given their report. The last three pages, the technical profile, are essentially for the interpreter's use and should not be handed over.

A general type booklet is not necessary unless the person did not receive one with their initial MBTI feedback. *Introduction to Type Dynamics and Development* or *In the Grip* may be useful, depending on the results.

References are listed below. The relevant text for Form K is Mitchell et al (1997). Two versions of Form K are available here, both with 131 questions. They differ in the use of adjectives and nouns in some questions but, barring evidence currently not available publicly, they're essentially the same form.

For Form Q, the small booklet *Explaining your MBTI Step II Results* (Kummerow and Quenk, 2003) may be helpful. As a presenter, or person giving feedback with this form, you should have a copy of the Form Q Manual (Quenk et al 2001)

The references also include publications referring to an earlier version of Form K output in the Expanded Analysis Report, which used some different terminology; these are more relevant historically than practically, and shouldn't be purchased.

Recently, Forms K and Q have become available online through APP in Australia, and it's assumed ACER will follow. Manual completion of Form K

9. Answer sheets and scores

People should *not* have their answer sheets returned. The EIR tells them all they need to know. The same applies to the profile on the last page.

These are for your records. Returning them brings up distracting issues around scores, amounts—'I'm borderline on ...', 'I don't score anything for ...'—that are irrelevant to the proper validating and understanding of type. This is much more likely with an instrument like the EIR, which provides a lot of detail.

As with all of the MBTI forms, although people are entitled to the sheet because they filled it out, it's better that it goes to the Psychological Type Research Unit at Deakin University. If you do send forms to the Research Unit, you need to declare it in some way. Saying that you're helping to find out the distribution of types in Australia is a useful explanation.

If you are asked about *scores*, you can say:

- ⌚ The MBTI is a sort, so amounts are not important.
- ⌚ Each answer is like a vote to find out which category you're in.
- ⌚ If you answer all the relevant questions for one category, then you're clear in your mind that this category is for you.
- ⌚ Less clear scores simply mean that the questions haven't been able to clarify the category for you as much as for others.
- ⌚ Clarity of preference has nothing to do with skill, or development.
- ⌚ Nor does mixed, midrange or midzone have anything to do with confusion, lack of differentiation, or equal use of both poles of a preference or subscale.

Question booklets should be retrieved: not only are they copyright, but they are not legally available to unauthorised persons, i.e. those who have not been accredited, qualified, or completed other relevant studies.

The basic MBTI Accreditation workshop technically enables people to purchase and use MBTI Step II, so you don't need a separate qualification. Nonetheless, completing a comprehensive course on Step II would seem essential to using it properly, and your distributor might actually demand that before they are prepared to sell it to you.. There are a few courses around and you can check them out to see what their orientations and processes are.

A process for individual Step II feedback

General introduction, purpose of session, etc

Revisiting original MBTI results—queries, etc

Discussion of type dynamics and development, and type versus trait

Introduction of Step II—what it does / doesn't do

Provision of Step II EIR printout

Individual explanation of preference subscales, with examples and exercises or talking points

Out-of-Position Scores—discussion, if there are any

EIR data on communication, other patterns

Discussion of results—further examples of preferences

Completion of session, with offers of further discussion

References

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