

# QUIZ: What's Your Communication Style?

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Go to the website below and take the quiz.

<https://www.glassdoor.com/blog/quiz-whats-your-communication-style/>

## HOW TO FLEX YOUR COMMUNICATION STYLE - FORGET THE GOLDEN RULE

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If we want to [communicate with influence](#) we need to forget the Golden Rule - *“Treat others as you would like to be treated.”* Of course we all want to be treated with dignity and respect; that is a given. But beyond that, it is important not to approach or communicate with others in the way *we* like to be treated, but approach them in the way that suits *them* the best; the Platinum Rule.

So how do others like to be treated? That can be a challenging question. As I mentioned, everyone likes to be treated with dignity and respect. That is your ticket in the door, but we all are unique and have personal preferences as well. For example, in the workplace some people like to work alone, others like the energy of groups. Some like to thoroughly analyze the situation before making a decision and others like to go with their gut. Some people have a focus on the team while others are more task focused. These are just a few ways we can differ from our co-workers. Before you start looking at others, it's a good idea to first determine what kind of preferences you have.

The Personal Interaction Style Profile© from PPS International is a great place to start. I have been utilizing this assessment in my programs for years. This is not a psychological assessment; it is behavioral. There are 58 yes/no questions asking what your preferences are when you interact with others. It's quick, easy to understand, but most importantly, easy to apply in the workplace. After taking the assessment, you will fall into one of four categories:

- **Expresser**

- **Director**
- **Analyzer**
- **Relater**

The [Expresser style](#) is very open and expressive – both verbally and nonverbally, meaning that people in this style tend to be open books. They will tell you anything you want to know, at any time. They are usually the people telling a joke, having fun and enjoying whatever situation they may find themselves in. They have no problem speaking their mind, which if they are not careful, can get them into some sticky situations. Because of their upfront, tell you everything kind of style, they can be overwhelming at times to others who don't share their interests. They are excellent promoters and can get others on board with their enthusiasm.

The [Director style](#) is very clear and direct. They are focused on getting things done and getting the desired results. They are fast paced, have no problem taking charge of a situation and telling others what to do. They feel their time is valuable and limited. In their effort to get things done, they may not realize how they are coming across to others or just who they may have left in their wake. They like clear, succinct information. They tend not to make time for socializing or relationship building. They will tell you that they are here to get the job done and that is what they have every intention of doing. They don't mind conflict and come across very confident (sometimes arrogant) if they are not careful.

The [Analyzer style](#) is very focused on data and information. The more facts, the better. They prefer to work alone and review all the necessary stats before making a decision. They do not like to be wrong and can sometimes over analyze a situation, causing delays, for fear of making a mistake. They like clear parameters and checklists. They prefer step-by-step instructions and procedures. They can have a difficult time with change. In a meeting, they tend to be quiet, gathering all the information they can, but often have a tough time being put on the spot to make a quick decision. They tend to be black/white thinkers. The data either supports it or it doesn't. The emotions of others, or the people side of a decision, almost never is considered in their equation.

The [Relater style](#) is your ultimate team player. Relaters make their decisions based on relationships. They enjoy talking with others and hearing all opinions. They are excellent listeners and often demonstrate great empathy. In their effort to make everyone happy, they may shy away from conflict. They do not like to rock the boat. They tend to be on the quieter side, asking a lot of questions, but unlike the Analyzer who is focused on the facts and data, Relaters are focused on others' feelings and opinions. Relaters are also very loyal and dedicated. They enjoy a sense of belonging and situations where their opinions matter and are valued. They work through the relationships that they build with others.

After hearing each of the styles, where do you think you fall? How about the people you work with? Live with? It's an interesting and important question to be asking yourself.

After you have determined your style and the style of those people who are important to you, you may notice that you are a lot more like some people than others. For example, I am an Expresser and I usually enjoy time with other Expressers. Their approach to interacting is similar to mine, we tend to make decisions in a similar way, and value the same approaches. You may notice that as well; you get along well with those people who are the same style as you.

Now think about the people who are very challenging to you. What style do you think they are? If it is a different style than you, this is your first clue as to what they may need from you (that you may not value yourself). For example, since I am an Expresser, my approach differs greatly from the Analyzer style. So when I meet with an Analyzer, in order to give them what they need, I need to [“flex” my style](#). I need to tone down the emotion, be less demonstrative with nonverbal body language and focus on the facts. I may even need to prepare my information and send it to them ahead of time so that they can review it. I need to be more clear and concise with my information and cut out the “fluff” that I may like to share in my reasoning. That is how I “flex” my style to work more effectively with an Analyzer.

Now let us go through each style and think through an easy scenario – being in a meeting – for each style. If I am another style, what do I need to do to “flex” my style to a Director in a meeting? Start on time, prepare an agenda with quick bullet points, focus on the results of what we are trying to accomplish, end on time, minimize small talk and cut out the fluff.

How about a meeting with a Relater? Ask how they are doing and how their family is doing, making time to listen and show empathy. Express your concern about the team. Give them the reasons why a decision is being made. Provide information on all the perspectives and opinions that have been considered.

A meeting with an Analyzer? Send them the information to be covered ahead of time. Provide all the relevant data and statistics. Be clear and systematic in your explanation. Minimize emotion and small talk. Give ample time for questions and discussion around the facts and give them time to formulate and share their decision.

Last but not least, how would you “flex” to an Expresser in a meeting? Create an informal setting. Be flexible. Add humor, smiles and show emotion. Tell them they are doing a good job and are an asset to the team. Allow ample time for conversation, while showing patience and interest in their story.

Some of the above “flexing” behaviors may be very challenging for you depending on your style and how you approach a situation. But when you are trying to be influential with someone, giving that person what they need is the key to great communication. I need to provide others with what they need in order to work more effectively with me. What is important to me may not be as important to others. I need to be very aware of that, especially with those people who I find very challenging to work with. Just try it.

[Included below is a summary of the various styles:](#)

- **Expressers** - Are easy to read, very social, show emotion, need recognition
- **Directors** - Are difficult to read, like action and getting things done, need results
- **Analyzers** - Non-emotional, very precise and systematic, need accurate facts
- **Relaters**- Good listeners, focus on relationships, team players, need harmony

The better you are at reading others and providing them what they need, the better communicator you will be. As you begin trying to determine what categories people fall into, don't think so much of the names of the styles, rather pay attention to what behaviors they are demonstrating. Also pay attention to what they are talking about, what is important to them and how they are expressing themselves. Once you have taken the time to make observations about others, then you can try ["flexing" your style](#).

Another way to determine how others want to be approached, is to simply ask them. It is amazing how often we assume things about others that are incorrect. But that's a blog for another day.

Good luck flexing!

## 4 communication styles and how to navigate them in the workplace

Communication styles and the differences between them cause a lot of undue stress. Here's how to navigate the 4 primary communication styles at work.

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The differences between communication styles often cause more agony than they really need to.

Understanding different communication styles and paying attention to which styles our teammates gravitate toward, can improve our interpersonal skills, build trust, and help us get more done with less frustration.

While we benefit from working with people with diverse skills and [personality types](#), sometimes it feels like navigating the interpersonal dynamics is the tax we pay on having the right people in the room. But there's another way of thinking about it.

Understanding our differences – especially in the way we communicate – is actually an investment. The payoff? Stronger workplace relationships, which is a [major predictor of employee engagement](#), and therefore of productivity. Not to mention that more effective communication with our co-workers goes a long way in reducing stress.

## Communication styles are influenced by behavior traits

There are a few different frameworks for understanding communication styles. Do a quick Google search and you'll find the classic four: assertive, aggressive, passive-aggressive, and passive. But these are all about a person's *outbound* communication, and say nothing about what works best for them when it comes to *inbound* communication. Besides, mirroring a passive-aggressive communicator isn't likely to result in constructive workplace interactions.



When figuring out how you can communicate effectively with someone, it's important to understand their broader personal style. Are they direct? Analytical? Sociable? Business-like? Behavioral traits clue us into how people respond to information, which, in turn, helps us anticipate how to converse in a way that strengthens the relationship.

The [DiSC profile](#) provides a useful framework for our purposes here. Through a self-assessment tool, DiSC categorizes your primary style as Dominant, Influencer, Steady, or Conscientious. Most people have shades of each, but we'll be focusing on their primary style.

## How to communicate with “dominant” types

People who have a “dominant” personal style (known in similar frameworks as a “director” or “driver”) love action and are focused on results. They prefer to think about the big picture, and leave implementation details to others – there's a pretty good chance your boss is primarily dominant. Patience and sensitivity are within a “dominant” communicator's grasp, but require some effort.

A few things to keep in mind when communicating with “dominants”:

### Try to...

- Get right down to business, and stay on topic.
- Be prepared to field follow-up questions on the spot so you can answer with confidence.
- Expect them to be decisive and fairly blunt.

### Avoid...

- Taking their bluntness, follow-up questions, and/or impatience personally.
- Making promises you can't deliver on.
- Expecting them to open up about their weekend plans.

Dominants are often accomplished, excitable, and love a good challenge. They're the ones you want to recruit for that moon-shot project you've been noodling on.

### **How to communicate with “influencer” types**

People with the “influencer” personal style (known in similar frameworks as an “initiator” or “socializer”) are your classic “people” people. They are friendly, upbeat, and always on the pulse of the latest trends. They thrive on interpersonal relationships, which makes them ace collaborators. A word of caution, though: long-term focus and follow-through aren’t their strong suits, so best to engage them in shorter collaborative bursts. A few things to keep in mind when communicating with “influencers”:

#### **Try to...**

- Approach them in a casual manner, and let your sense of humor show.
- Put details and facts in writing for them to refer back to after a verbal conversation.
- Expect them to be a little *too* optimistic about ideas, as well as their own abilities and the abilities of those around them.

#### **Avoid...**

- Talking down to them or being curt.
- Trying to confine the conversation or stifle their freedom to express ideas and emotions.
- Expecting them to dive deep into the details with you.

Influencers strive to be emotionally honest and are quick to trust those around them. If you’re trying to re-shape the culture on your team, an influencer might be the perfect partner in crime.

### **How to communicate with “steady” types**

People who have a “steady” personal style (known in similar frameworks as a “relator” or “harmonizer”) emphasize cooperation and are loathe to upset the apple cart. They value consistency, stability, and loyalty. You’ll often find them in service-flavored roles in customer support or IT help desk. They can adapt quickly when they have to, but may need some extra encouragement along the way.

A few things to keep in mind when communicating with “steadies”:

#### **Try to...**

- [Practice active listening](#), and confirm that you’ve heard them by summarizing what they’ve just said to you.
- Approach them with a relaxed vibe, and break the ice by acknowledging a recent contribution they’ve made.
- Expect them to ask for details.

#### **Avoid...**

- Rushing them into a decision.
- Assuming they support an idea 100% just because they don’t voice opposition.
- Expecting them to intuit priorities and deadlines – it’s helpful if you spell those out.

Steadies are even-keel people who love to be in a cooperative environment where everyone understands their roles and responsibilities. If your team is in turmoil, a steady likely won't *lead* the effort to restore normalcy, but they'll be a strong ally.

### **How to communicate with “conscientious” types**

People of the “conscientious” personal style (known in similar frameworks as an “analyzer” or “thinker”) prioritize precision and place a high value on competency. They jump at the chance to demonstrate their expertise and build new skills – just the sort of person you're likely to find in an engineering, data science, or analyst role. They aren't unfriendly, per se, but probably won't chat you up about weekend plans or volunteer to organize a team dinner.

A few things to keep in mind when communicating with “conscientious” types:

#### **Try to...**

- Provide as many details as possible up front, organized as systematically as you can.
- Give them clear expectations and space to work independently (they're really good at it!).
- Expect them to double- and triple-check all the relevant info before making a decision.

#### **Avoid...**

- Framing feedback on their work as “criticism.”
- Responding to them emotionally – use words like “know” or “think” instead of “feel.”
- Expecting them to ease into a conversation with chit-chat.

Conscientious types are not only cautious, but highly systematic. They're the person you want to partner with when assessing risks or running a pre-mortem for the project you're about to launch.

### **Navigating workplace communication styles doesn't have to be stressful**

Thinking back, many (if not most) of the stressful interactions I've had were caused in part by a mismatch in communication styles. By the same token, most effective interactions I've had with co-workers featured a level of comfortable formality, complementary body language, and a general feeling that we “get” each other.

Communicating with teammates in a way that resonates with them is an express lane to building trust. It's a way of saying “I see you for who you are, and I've got your back.”

And guess what? They'll have your back, too.