

# Thinker, feeler, knower, sensor

## Four ways of processing information

In 1928, Carl Jung identified that people receive and process information in four ways:

**thinking**

**feeling**

**intuition** (which I refer to as 'knowing' because that's the word people tend to use in natural speech) and **sensing** (in a kinaesthetic sense).

Each of us favours one of the modes above the others but we all use all four. I am using these words with a slightly specialised definition, so here is my illustration of them.

In the processing that goes towards decision making, **thinkers** use data: facts and figures; they analyse and deduce. **Feelers** consider their emotions, and there is a sense of 'feeling their way'. **Knowers** are the intuitive ones: they may not actually know how they made the decision, but they are sure it's right (incidentally this certainty of being right doesn't actually make them more right than anyone else!). And **sensors** will use the input from their senses to inform them.

### In the restaurant

Consider you're in a restaurant with a group of people. The **thinkers** will have to read every page of the menu, check out the prices of all the dishes, check they can afford their choice, check they're not allergic to lemongrass—it's all analytical and can take some time in your average Chinese restaurant.

The **feelers** will be asking themselves 'what do I feel like today?', they will be recalling how much they enjoyed similar dishes on previous occasions—this can take quite a lot of time, too.

The **knowers** probably knew before they got to the restaurant what they wanted and see no reason to look at the menu. The thinkers and feelers drive them mad and their best tactic is to slope off to the bar for ten minutes.

The **sensors** really want to have a taste, but will settle for having a look at what other people are getting.

To be crassly simplistic, you might say that accountants are probably predominantly thinkers, coaches are feelers, stock market traders are knowers and graphic designers are sensors.

### Intuition

Intuition needs a special explanation. There are many ideas about what intuition is: I have seen it described as a sense; worse, I have seen it referred to as a link to some higher consciousness.

Intuition is simply a rational process—like thinking—but it is subconscious. Because it is subconscious, we are, by definition, unaware of it. That does not mean it isn't a rational process though. It does explain why (a) knowers are no more accurate than thinkers, and (b) knowers get to the answer faster (because the conscious part of the mind is spared the trouble of working it all out).

And instinct is something else again. **Instinct** is not one of the ways we process information. It is an innate predisposition to behave in a certain way, whether it is being a mother or running away from fierce animals or, as Steven Pinker brilliantly showed in his book, *The language instinct*, the capacity of very young humans to acquire language.

## We all do all four

No one is purely one of these ways. We all use all four, but the vast majority of people favour one way over the other three, sometimes markedly so.

(Incidentally, this work by Jung forms the basis of the Myers-Briggs personality metrics (and those of all its imitators) so, unlike most advances in theoretical psychology, this one has been tried and tested millions of times.)

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> [We make all of our decisions based on feelings](#)

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