


North, South, East and West: Compass Points

An Exercise in Understanding Preferences in Group Work

Developed in the field by educators.

Similar to the Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory, this exercise uses a set of preferences which relate not to individual but to group behaviors, helping us to understand how preferences affect our group work.

1. The room is set up with four signs on each wall — North, South, East and West.
2. Participants are invited to go to the “direction” of their choice. No one is only one “direction,” but everyone can choose one as their pre-dominant one.
3. Each “direction” answers the five questions on a sheet of newsprint. When complete, they report back to the whole group.
4. Processing can include:
 - Note the distribution among the “directions”: what might it mean?
 - What is the best combination for a group to have? Does it matter?
 - How can you avoid being driven crazy by another “direction”?
 - How might you use this exercise with others? Students?

	<p>North <i>Acting – “Let’s do it;” likes to act, try things, plunge in.</i></p>	
<p>West <i>Paying attention to detail —likes to know the who, what, when, where and why before acting.</i></p>		<p>East <i>Speculating – likes to look at the big picture and the possibilities before acting.</i></p>
	<p>South <i>Caring – likes to know that everyone’s feelings have been taken into consideration and that their voices have been heard before acting.</i></p>	

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Decide which of the four “directions” most closely describes your personal style. Then spend 15 minutes answering the following questions as a group.

1. What are the strengths of your style? (4 adjectives)

2. What are the limitations of your style? (4 adjectives)

3. What style do you find most difficult to work with and why?

4. What do people from the other “directions” or styles need to know about you so you can work together effectively?

5. What do you value about the other three styles?