

Mastering our relationships

Self-assessment of communication style

There are many profiling techniques that help you assess your own and your colleagues' styles of thinking, behaviour, or communication (e.g. MBTI/Myers-Briggs, DISC, HBDI/Herrmann, LSI/Human Synergistics, etc.).

These are usually licensed and protected from use by uncertified practitioners, however there is one that has elements of all those, is open source and royalty free, and so you are able to use that and take it away to freely use it with your colleagues.

The four-bird model (DOPE)

This is the four-bird model, sometimes also called DOPE, as the four birds it uses to represent communication styles are the Dove, the Owl, the Peacock, and the Eagle.

Over the next few pages are descriptions of the thinking, behavioural, and communication styles associated with each of these four birds, followed by a self-assessment questionnaire – 30 simple questions and a grid to map your results to determine which type of bird you or your colleagues are.

Please note that this is a highly subjective technique that will only assess you in the moment, so will not necessarily reflect your normal styles – however it still serves to illustrate that there are different types, and how our awareness of someone's preferred communication style can help us communicate more effectively with them.

The Dove

The **compassionate dove** is people-orientated, loyal, friendly hard working and a great team player but tends to avoid change, confrontation, risk-taking and assertiveness.

What doves do well

- A natural 'people person' and enjoy helping other people succeed.
- Good at building relationships and networking – the key to your success.
- Get fulfilment from satisfying social needs like friendship and sense of belonging.
- A team player, loyal, easy to get along with, patient and reliable.
- Happy to follow plans as part of a team, but not necessarily on your own.
- Motivated by relationships, shared goals, community service and the common good.

What to watch out for

- Not a natural goal setter, you focus more on the needs of others than your own.
- If you do set goals, they are more likely based on what other people think you should do rather than what you really want.
- Have difficulty confronting problems and asserting yourself.
- Tend to avoid conflict and risk taking, and resist change.
- Not a good planner and don't particularly like detail.

The Owl

The **wise owl** is logical, mathematically minded, methodical and sometimes seen as a perfectionist. You can be slow to make decisions and inflexible if rules and logic says otherwise. Not a big risk taker, but you love detail.

What owls do well

- Naturally curious and interested in gaining knowledge and becoming an expert.
- Thorough, meticulous, accurate, reliable, logical and good with details.
- Like rules, procedures and structure and are a careful (but cautious) planner.
- Think things through to minimise risk and the chance of things going wrong.
- Like being prepared and being in control through preparation and planning.
- Generally get along with other people, but have high expectations of their abilities.
- Motivated by knowledge, expertise and logic.

What to watch out for

- Tend to focus too much on details, and lose sight of the big picture.
- Plan everything to the extreme, taking too long to plan and not enough time to act.
- A perfectionist, focusing on doing the job right, rather than doing the right job.
- Don't like stepping out of your comfort zone or taking risks because you don't feel in control or prepared.

The Peacock

The **showy peacock** loves talking, being the centre of attention, has passion/enthusiasm and is happy/optimistic. They can be accused of talking too much, and aren't good with detail or time-control.

What peacocks do well

- Enthusiastic, influential, optimistic, passionate, people-orientated, charismatic.
- Continually seek new opportunities and experiences following your passions.
- Enjoy the journey as much as the result.
- Can take big risks for excitement and driven by passion – you dream big.
- Flexible and open-minded and tend to notice and seize opportunities.
- Enlist the help of others through your 'people-oriented' nature, and can work by yourself if necessary.
- Motivated by having fun, being popular and social.

What to watch out for

- Tend to value fulfilment over achievement, so often don't achieve specific goals.
- Like to focus on the big picture, often get lost in details through lack of planning.
- Not good at being thorough or sticking to details.
- Don't like structure, may be impulsive, bored by details, and easily get distracted.
- When the going gets tough, likely to give up and move on to something else.

The Eagle

The **bold eagle** is dominant, stimulated by challenge, decisive and direct. They can be blunt/ stubborn, can lose sight of the big-picture and can be insensitive to other people's needs, but are natural achievers.

What eagles do well

- Highly focused, driven and motivated
- Result focused goal setting is 'natural' to you.
- Not afraid of failure and just see it as a challenge to bounce back.
- Persistent in achieving goals, even if it takes personal sacrifices to get there.
- Take risks.
- Independent and like to do things "your" way. You don't like to fail.
- Like being productive and making progress.
- Motivated by power, challenge, results and achievement – a natural leader.

What to watch out for

- May lose sight of the big picture.
- May not pay enough attention to the detail, leading to lack of adequate planning.
- May choose goals for the thrill of the chase or from being impulsive, rather than well thought out goals that you really want.
- Can be inflexible, impatient and easily bored with detail, which can make you take needless risks.
- Can be stubborn and sometimes too confident for your own good.
- May value results over people.

Self-assessment questionnaire

Part 1: Assertiveness

I perceive myself as:

1	Quiet			Talkative
	1	2	3	4
2	Slow to decide			Fast to decide
	1	2	3	4
3	Going along			Taking charge
	1	2	3	4
4	Supportive			Challenging
	1	2	3	4
5	Compliant			Dominant
	1	2	3	4
6	Deliberate			Snappy
	1	2	3	4
7	Asking questions			Making statements
	1	2	3	4
8	Cooperative			Competitive
	1	2	3	4
9	Avoiding risks			Taking risks
	1	2	3	4
10	Slow / studied			Fast-paced
	1	2	3	4
11	Cautious			Care-free
	1	2	3	4
12	Indulgent			Firm
	1	2	3	4
13	Non-assertive			Assertive
	1	2	3	4
14	Mellow			Matter-of-fact
	1	2	3	4
15	Reserved			Outgoing
	1	2	3	4
Total	Total of values you selected above			
Average	Total divided by 15			

Part 2: Responsiveness

I perceive myself as:

1	Open			Closed
	1	2	3	4
2	Impulsive			Deliberate
	1	2	3	4
3	Using opinions			Using facts
	1	2	3	4
4	Informal			Formal
	1	2	3	4
5	Emotional			Rational
	1	2	3	4
6	Easy to know			Hard to know
	1	2	3	4
7	Warm			Cool
	1	2	3	4
8	Excitable			Calm
	1	2	3	4
9	Animated			Poker-faced
	1	2	3	4
10	People-oriented			Task-oriented
	1	2	3	4
11	Spontaneous			Cautious
	1	2	3	4
12	Responsive			Non-responsive
	1	2	3	4
13	Humorous			Serious
	1	2	3	4
14	Impulsive			Methodical
	1	2	3	4
15	Light-hearted			Intense
	1	2	3	4
Total				Total of values you selected above
Average				Total divided by 15

Part 3: Communication style analysis

On the scale below, find where your average scores for **assertiveness** and **responsiveness** would sit, then find the point where lines drawn from both scores would intersect. The quadrant in which your scores cross indicates your dominant approach to communication.

