

## Representation systems

Our senses are the doorways of our perception. All we know of the world we know through our senses. We have five main sensory modalities, or representation systems.

Our inner subjective experience is structured in terms of these senses. When we think, or process information internally, we "re-present" the information in terms of the sensory systems that are our only contact with the "outside world".

<b>V</b>	Visual	seeing
<b>A</b>	Auditory	hearing
<b>K</b>	Kinaesthetic	feeling
<b>O</b>	Olfactory	smelling
<b>G</b>	Gustatory	tasting

Part of the language we use comes from one of these main systems. These sensory based words are called **predicates**.

Use of rich sensory based language enables you to ensure that you are including all your listeners, regardless of their primary sensory system, in full communication. It enables you to create a sensory rich description to which everyone can relate more effectively. If you are to gain commitment to an idea, then the more richly it is described the more effectively it will be communicated.

<b>Visual</b>	<b>Auditory</b>	<b>Kinaesthetic</b>	<b>Olfactory</b>	<b>Gustatory</b>
look	say	touch	scent	flavour
picture	accent	move	stink	sweet
bright	question	pressure	whiff	appetite
outlook	click	handle	reek	sour
focus	rhythm	loose	fishy	feed
vision	language	insensitive	air	juicy
perspective	speech	rough	nostril	spicy

### Non sensory based language includes:

Think, know, sense, understand, notice, decide, explain, arrange, perceive, recognise, work out, attend, remember.

Here are some exercises to develop your understanding of representation systems, followed by a questionnaire to help you identify your primary representational system.

## Exercise 1

Describe an experience or something you would like to achieve using non-sensory based language. Then repeat the process using enriched sensory specific language. Your objective is to get your listeners fully involved in the experience.

As you talk, remember:

What did you see?

What did you hear?

How did it feel?

Also, was there anything you could smell or taste?

Take turns to describe and to listen.

What was the difference?

Did you enjoy enriching the description?

What was your response to the two descriptions? How did it vary?

Predicates are the auditory cues to the representation systems that others are using. A person's choice of language indicates which sensory system they are using at any one time.

Adapting your own choice of language so that it matches that of the other person will increase rapport and assist them in understanding what you wish to communicate. The information slides comfortably into their brain processes instead of having to be changed around or translated in order to be understood.

You may find that those people who put you at ease immediately are operating in your favourite system. Those with whom you often have conflicts may simply be viewing the same situation from another representational system.

### **Visual metaphors**

I see what you mean.  
I want a different perspective.  
Try to see things my way.  
I have a vision of how things could be.  
Things are looking up.  
Shed some light on the matter.

I'm trying to picture it.  
Clear as mud.  
Let's look at this closely.  
The outlook is dim.  
Seeing eye to eye.  
It's not yet clear.

### **Auditory metaphors**

We're on the same wavelength.  
Speaking the same language.  
Tune in to this.  
I hear what you are saying.  
I like your story.  
Lost for words.

Living in harmony.  
Talking gobbledygook.  
Quiet as a mouse.  
Sounds good.  
Turn a deaf ear.  
Strikes a chord.

### **Kinaesthetic metaphors**

I'm ready to tackle this head on.  
I've got a feel for the place.  
He wants something concrete.  
Maintaining a sense of balance.  
A sticky situation.  
A cool customer.

Things just flowed.  
Get a grip on yourself.  
Can you grasp the idea?  
He rubs me up the wrong way.  
I feel it in my bones.  
One step at a time.

### **Exercise 2**

Working in groups, each make a statement which starts with the representation system last used and ends with a new one. Continue round using as many representation systems as you can. Try to make up your own metaphors.

eg I hear what you say but I can't see it working.

Yes, a different perspective would help us to get a sense of balance.

That's a hard proposal. I'm lost for words.

It sounds good. Can you show us a way ahead.

It looks good. It sounds good. But it is going to be tough to do.

Make up a sentence of your own using a visual metaphor:

Make up a sentence of your own using an auditory metaphor:

Make up a sentence of your own using a kinaesthetic metaphor:

## Identifying your primary representational system

The answers to these questions will help you understand how you communicate.

### **Please read the following before answering the questions:-**

Answer each question with **the very first response that comes to mind**. If you have trouble deciding between two answers, tick the one that occurs first. There is no need for undue pondering and thought. Your first response is usually the most appropriate.

If you are still having a difficult time choosing, think of specific circumstances in your life – relative to the question – that come closest to approximating the answer.

If you get a sudden case of the “How I might make the test come out the way I want it to”, resist, resist, resist. Purposely slanting the answers will make the outcome meaningless and devoid of the information from which you could benefit.

Finally there is no representational system that is better or worse than the others. Your representational type doesn't have any relevance to the kind of human being you are, it simply sheds light on how you relate as a human being and reveals how you run your relationships.

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**When you recall a time you were immensely drawn to someone, what was the very first thing that attracted you to them? Was it:**

- A. The way they looked
- B. Something they said to you or that you heard
- C. The way they touched you or something you felt

**When you recall a particularly wonderful holiday you had, what's the very first experience you remember? Was it:**

- A. The way the place looked
- B. The different way it sounded to you
- C. The feeling you got about holidaying there

**When you drive, how do you navigate?**

- A. I look at road signs or follow a map of the area
- B. I listen for familiar sounds that point me in the right direction
- C. I get a gut feeling or sense of where I am

**When I play my favourite sport, I particularly enjoy:**

- A. How I look playing at it
- B. The sound of the game, such as the thwack of the ball
- C. The feel of the game, the grip of the club or the sense of motion

**When I get a task at work, it is easier to understand and carry out if:**

- A. It is written or I have a plan
- B. It is explained to me
- C. I get a sense of purpose, clarity from it

**When my problems get me down, I find it helps to:**

- A. Write them down so I can see them clearly
- B. Talk or listen to another until my problems sound easier to hear
- C. Sort them out inside my head until they make sense

**I find it easier to be with my friends if:**

- A. They communicate using 'to the point' statements
- B. They interact with me through easy to hear and varying speech
- C. I get a feeling that they know where I am coming from

**When I make decisions it helps to:**

- A. Picture the possible choices in my mind's eye
- B. Hear both sides of a dialogue within my mind
- C. Sense how I would feel if either choice came to pass

**Which group do I tend to favour:**

- A. Photography, painting, reading, drawing, films
- B. Music, the sound of the sea, the wind, chimes, concerts
- C. Ball games, massage, touching, craft work, reflection

**During sex, I like to:**

- A. Look at what is going on
- B. Hear my lover
- C. Feel every sensation

**When I buy an article of clothing, after first seeing it the very next thing I do is:**

- A. Take another look at it or picture myself wearing it
- B. Listen closely to the sales assistant or have a conversation with myself giving the pros and cons of buying it
- C. Get a feeling about it and/or touch it to know if it's something I'd enjoy wearing

**On the occasions when I think of a former lover or special person, the very *first* thing I do is:**

- A. See the person in my mind's eye
- B. Hear his or her voice in my mind
- C. Get a certain feeling about the person

**At a gym, my experience of satisfaction comes *first* from:**

- A. Seeing myself in the mirror getting better
- B. Hearing myself or others say how good I'm looking
- C. Feeling my body get stronger and sensing it's more in shape

**When I have occasion to use mathematics, I verify the answer by:**

- A. Looking at the numbers to see if they look correct
- B. Counting the numbers in my head
- C. Using my fingers to get a sense of correctness

**When I spell, I verify accuracy by:**

- A. Looking at the word in my mind's eye to see if it looks the way that word should
- B. Saying the word out loud or hearing it in my mind
- C. Getting a feeling about the way the word is spelt

**The subject I enjoyed the most in school came about *primarily* as a result of:**

- A. The way it looked on the board or in books
- B. The sound of the subject as it was taught to me
- C. My sense of interest as I learned more about it

**When I love someone, I get an immediate experience of:**

- A. The way we look together through the eyes of love
- B. The sound of telling him or her or being told, "I love you"
- C. A feeling or sense of warmth toward that person

**When I take a dislike to someone, I get an immediate experience of distaste:**

- A. When I see them approach
- B. When they begin talking to me
- C. When I sense they're nearby

**At the beach, the very first thing that makes me glad to be there is:**

- A. The look of the sand, the smiling sun, and the ice-blue water
- B. The sound of the waves, the laughing wind, and distant whispers
- C. The feel of the sand, the salt air on my lips and the joy of serenity

**Having a conversation at a party, my whole frame of experience will change if:**

- A. The lights get brighter or dimmer
- B. The music changes pace
- C. The room temperature changes

**I know my career is taking a turn for the better when:**

- A. I see myself moving into a more private office
- B. I hear the managing director say, "You're really going to go places."
- C. I feel satisfaction in getting a promotion.

**Before going to sleep at night, it's important that:**

- A. The room is nearly dark or pleasantly shaded
- B. The room is hushed or muted with pleasing background quiet
- C. The bed feels very comfortable

**In the morning, I especially enjoy awakening to:**

- A. Either the sun streaming in or an overcast day
- B. The sound of a lively wind or rain pelting the windows
- C. A warm duvet or flannel sheets

**When I experience anxiety, the very first thing that happens is:**

- A. The world takes on a different appearance in some way
- B. Sounds begin to bother me
- C. My sense of ease begins to alter

**When I'm very happy, my world:**

- A. Takes on a definite and wonderful shine
- B. Resonates with total harmony
- C. Fits perfectly within the space of my life

**I get along better with people who:**

- A. Relate to the world through the way it looks
- B. Relate to the world through the way it sounds
- C. Relate to the world through the way it makes them feel

**When I get totally motivated the first thing that happens is:**

- A. I see things from a new and resourceful perspective
- B. I tell myself how this state is going to create new possibilities
- C. I can actually feel myself getting psyched up

**When someone tells me "I love you" my first experience is:**

- A. An image of the person loving me, or us together
- B. A dialogue within my soul saying, "This is wonderful"
- C. A feeling of pleasurable contentment

**Death, for me is probably:**

- A. To see no more, or to see in a totally new way
- B. To hear no more, or to hear in a totally new way
- C. To feel no more, or to feel in a totally new way

**Having rapport with someone is:**

- A. Seeing him or her in a wonderful and easy-to-be-with way
- B. Hearing the person communicate things exactly the way they should
- C. Feeling toward the person the way I know he or she feels toward me.

END

Now add up the three separate scores of A's, B's and C's. The letter with the highest number indicates that this is probably your primary representational system.

Number of A's .....

Number of B's .....

Number of C's .....

A's = Visual

B's = Auditory

C's = Kinaesthetic

If you score a 10 in each category, take the test again in a day or so; you'll probably find one area predominates.

If your three scores are still close together in value, it means that though you might be primarily visual, for example, many of your strategies are kinaesthetic or auditory.

If your scores are highly slanted, that is to say, higher than 17 in any category, you are clearly dominant in that representational system.