



# About Everything DiSC: Theory and Research

WILEY

Everything DiSC® is a personal development learning experience that measures an individual's preferences and tendencies based on the DiSC® model. **But, what is the DiSC model?**

The DiSC Model is a simple yet powerful model that describes four basic behavioral styles: D, i, S, and C, and serves as the foundation for each distinct Everything DiSC application.

- D: Dominance**
- i: Influence**
- S: Steadiness**
- C: Conscientiousness**

Everyone is a blend of all four DiSC styles—usually one, two, or even three styles stand out. Unlike many personality tests, there is no perfect result or DiSC style. Each person has a unique behavioral profile with different styles and priorities—no one style better or worse than the next. We believe that these differences in style can be extremely valuable. Once you assess these differences and harness their value, better workplace communication AND healthier organizations become possible.

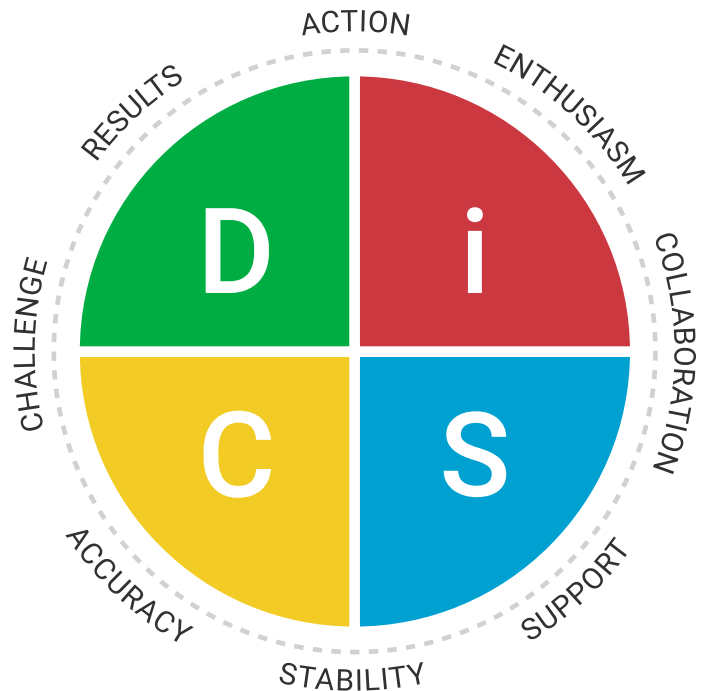
Seems simple, right? It is. But it's not simplistic.

Here's why:

We've been researching and analyzing DiSC for over 40 years. In fact, our DiSC® Classic Paper Profile was the **first DiSC assessment ever!** (You'll always know it's our DiSC by our signature lower-cased "i" in DiSC.)

As technology has evolved, DiSC has too. Our online DiSC assessments use the most advanced assessment method (adaptive testing) and sophisticated algorithms to quickly analyze a person's responses and deliver the most precise feedback possible. The profile translates these assessment results into a personalized narrative that's both actionable and memorable.

All of our Everything DiSC personality assessments are application-focused, so the feedback is presented to you as a leader, manager, individual contributor, or sales person.



# DiSC® Theory

## Two Dimensions of Human Behavior

Although DiSC describes four styles, the model is, at its core, two-dimensional. These two dimensions reflect fundamental aspects of human nature and can be viewed as independent constructs.

### VERTICAL DIMENSION: CAUTIOUS-BOLD



#### Everything DiSC Vertical Dimension

The vertical dimension is best described as level of activity, ranging from active to thoughtful. People with DiSC styles at the top of the circle tend to be fast-paced and are often described as assertive, dynamic, and bold. Traditional explanations of the model suggest that these people perceive themselves as more powerful than the environment. Because of this perception, they tend to exert effort to change their circumstances. Conversely, people with styles that fall toward the bottom of the circle tend to be more moderate paced and are often described as calm, methodical, and careful. Traditionally, these people are thought to perceive themselves as less powerful than the environment, and thus they are more inclined to adapt to existing circumstances.

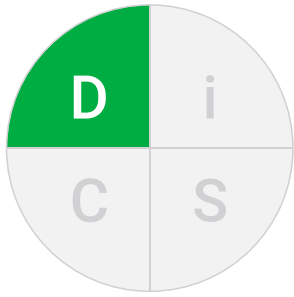
### HORIZONTAL DIMENSION: QUESTIONING-ACCEPTING



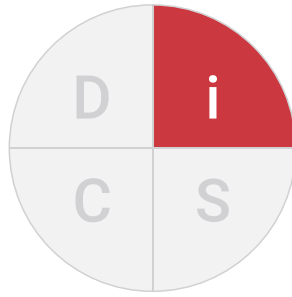
#### Everything DiSC Horizontal Dimension

The horizontal dimension runs from questioning to accepting. People with DiSC styles that fall toward the left side of the circle are naturally more skeptical in nature and are often described as logic-focused, objective, and challenging. A traditional explanation of these characteristics is that these people see the environment as antagonistic. In other words, they instinctively withhold trust from people and ideas until those outside elements can be thoroughly vetted. On the other hand, people with styles on the right side of the circle are naturally more receptive in nature and are often described as people-focused, empathizing, and agreeable. Traditionally, they are said to see the environment as being aligned with their interests. In essence, they are biased to see the people and ideas around them as favorable and are thus inclined to trust them.

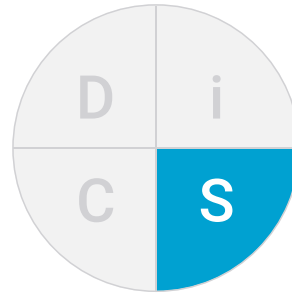
# The Four Quadrants of DiSC®



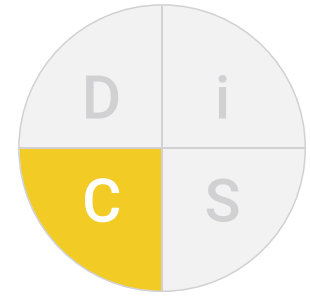
The **D (Dominance)** style is active and questioning. This describes people who are direct, forceful, and outspoken with their opinions.



The **i (Influence)** style is active and accepting. This describes people who are outgoing, enthusiastic, and lively.



The **S (Steadiness)** style is thoughtful and accepting. This describes people who are gentle, accommodating, and patient with others' mistakes.



The **C (Conscientiousness)** style is thoughtful and questioning. This describes people who are analytical, reserved, and precise.

Although the DiSC dimensions form four distinct styles, it is probably more useful to think of the DiSC circle in continuous terms. Consider that each of the four styles blend into their neighboring styles much the same way that colors blend into one another on the color wheel. Red and yellow are distinct colors, but they both blend to form a new color, orange. In the same way, the D and i styles are distinct, but the space between them on the circle represents an equally distinct set of traits. For instance, people with a Di style are more likely than people with the D style to describe themselves as daring and convincing. A person with an iD style is more likely than someone with the i style to describe himself as charismatic and dynamic. In both cases, these two styles (Di and iD) share something with the D and i styles, but they also have characteristics that differentiate them from those singular styles.

You may also notice that when discussing DiSC, we go out of our way to say “a person with the C style” rather than simply calling someone a “C”. This subtle difference in language is meant to mitigate the natural temptation to pigeonhole people. Although a person with the C style predominantly demonstrates C traits, she has elements of the other four styles in her as well. For example, it is likely that she is quite capable of patiently listening to a coworker describe his hurt feelings, even though this is more of an S quality.

## THE IDEA OF STRETCH

The continuous nature of the DiSC circle also helps people understand the idea of “stretch.” It is helpful to think of your style as your home base or comfort zone. Someone with a C style may be very comfortable working alone on analytical projects that require accuracy. At times, however, this person may be called on to mingle with strangers at a professional function. In this case, the person is being asked to stretch across the circle toward the i style. Now, someone with the C style who has a dot close to the center of the circle will probably find this mingling unpleasant, but manageable. On the other hand, someone with a C style whose dot is located on the edge of the circle is more likely to find this mingling highly stressful. In the second case, the person has had to travel farther outside their comfort zone, and that will require more energy. So, as a general rule, people with dots located close to the center usually have a somewhat easier time adopting foreign DiSC styles when the situation calls for it. People whose dots are on the edge of the circle may have to stretch more (and experience more stress) if they want to adopt another style. On the other hand, because these people have more pronounced DiSC styles, those styles are often accompanied by some very distinct strengths.

# DiSC<sup>®</sup> Research

Psychological instruments are used to measure abstract qualities that we can't touch or see. These are characteristics like intelligence, extroversion, or honesty. So how do researchers evaluate these instruments? How do we know whether such tools are actually providing accurate information about these characteristics or just generating haphazard feedback that sounds believable?

Simply put, if an instrument is indeed useful and accurate, it should meet a variety of different standards that have been established by the scientific community. Validation is the process through which researchers assess the quality of a psychological instrument by testing the tool against these different standards. This page is designed to help you understand these different standards and see how the Everything DiSC assessment performs under examination. For more detailed information, see the full Everything DiSC Research Report.

Validation asks two fundamental questions:

**How reliable is the tool?** That is, researchers ask if an instrument measures in a consistent and dependable way. If the results contain a lot of random variation, it is deemed less reliable.

**How valid is the tool?** That is, researchers ask if an instrument measures accurately. The more that a tool measures what it proposes to measure, the more valid the tool is.

Note that no psychometric tool is perfectly reliable or perfectly valid. All psychological instruments are subject to various sources of error. Reliability and validity are seen as matters of degree on continuous scales, rather than reliable/unreliable and valid/invalid on dichotomous scales. Consequently, it is more appropriate to ask, "How much evidence is there for the reliability of this tool?" than, "Is this tool reliable?"

## SCALES

A person's DiSC style is measured by asking them the degree to which they agree with a series of statements about themselves. These responses are used to calculate a score for that individual on eight scales. The eight scales are as follows:

- **D** measures a direct, dominant disposition using adjectives such as aggressive, strong-willed, and forceful.
- **Di** measures an active, fast-paced disposition using adjectives such as dynamic, adventurous, and bold.
- **i** measures an interactive, influencing disposition using adjectives such as sociable, lively, and talkative.
- **iS** measures an agreeable, warm disposition using adjectives such as trusting, cheerful, and caring.
- **S** measures an accommodating, steady disposition using adjectives such as considerate, gentle, and soft-hearted.
- **SC** measures a moderate-paced, cautious disposition using adjectives such as careful, soft-spoken, and self-controlled.
- **C** measures a private, conscientious disposition using adjectives such as analytical, reserved, and unemotional.
- **CD** measures a questioning, skeptical disposition using adjectives such as cynical, stubborn, and critical. Although these scales do not show up in the profile, they are used to determine which style the respondent receives.

## RELIABILITY

To determine if a tool is reliable, researchers look at the stability of the instrument and the internal consistency of the instrument. Stability is easy to understand. In this case, a researcher would simply have a group of people take the same assessment twice and correlate the results. This is called test-retest reliability. Internal

**TABLE 1. SCALE RELIABILITIES**

	Test-Retest	Alpha
(2 Week)		
<b>Di</b>	<b>.86</b>	<b>.90</b>
<b>i</b>	<b>.87</b>	<b>.90</b>
<b>iS</b>	<b>.85</b>	<b>.86</b>
<b>S</b>	<b>.86</b>	<b>.87</b>
<b>SC</b>	<b>.88</b>	<b>.84</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>.85</b>	<b>.79</b>
<b>CD</b>	<b>.85</b>	<b>.87</b>
<b>D</b>	<b>.86</b>	<b>.88</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>599</b>	<b>752</b>

consistency is more difficult to understand. Here, we have the assumption that all of the questions (or items) on a given scale are measuring the same trait. As a consequence, all of these items should, in theory, correlate with each other. Internal consistency is represented using a metric called alpha.

We can use similar standards to evaluate both test-retest and alpha. The maximum value is 1.0 and higher values indicate higher levels of reliability. Although not set in stone, most researchers use the following guidelines to interpret values: above .9 is considered excellent, above .8 is considered good, above .7 is considered acceptable, and below .7 is considered questionable. The reliability estimates for the eight DiSC® scales are shown in Table 1.

As Table 1 shows, all values were well above the .70 cutoff and all but one were above .80. This suggests that the measurement of DiSC is both stable and internally consistent. For more information on the reliability of the DiSC scales, see the more in-depth Everything DiSC Research Report.

## VALIDITY

There are many different ways to examine the validity of an assessment. We will provide two such examples here, but many more are included in the full Everything DiSC Research Report.

The DiSC model proposes that adjacent scales (e.g., Di and i) will have moderate correlations. That is, these correlations should be considerably smaller than the alpha reliabilities of the individual scales. For example, the correlation between the Di and i scales (.50) should be substantially lower than the Alpha reliability of the Di or i scales (both .90). On the other hand, scales that are theoretically opposite (e.g., i and C) should have strong negative correlations. Table 2 shows data obtained from a sample of 752 respondents who completed the Everything DiSC assessment. The correlations among all eight scales show strong support for the model. That is, moderate positive correlations among adjacent scales and strong negative correlations are observed between opposite scales.



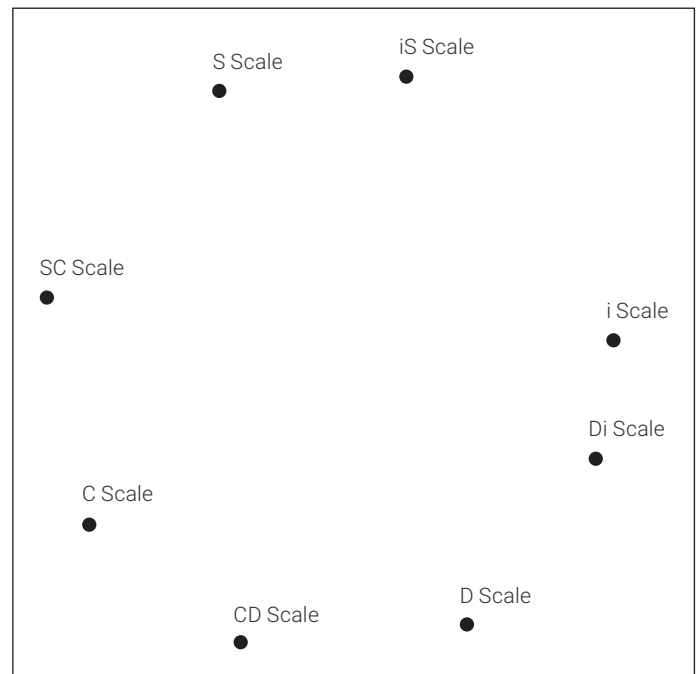
**TABLE 2. SCALE INTERCORRELATIONS**

	<b>Di</b>	<b>i</b>	<b>iS</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>SC</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>CD</b>	<b>D</b>
<b>Di</b>	<b>.90</b>							
<b>i</b>	<b>.50</b>	<b>.90</b>						
<b>iS</b>	<b>.04</b>	<b>.47</b>	<b>.86</b>					
<b>S</b>	<b>-.31</b>	<b>.03</b>	<b>.57</b>	<b>.87</b>				
<b>SC</b>	<b>-.73</b>	<b>-.56</b>	<b>-.13</b>	<b>.34</b>	<b>.84</b>			
<b>C</b>	<b>-.43</b>	<b>-.70</b>	<b>-.49</b>	<b>-.18</b>	<b>.45</b>	<b>.79</b>		
<b>CD</b>	<b>-.14</b>	<b>-.37</b>	<b>-.68</b>	<b>-.66</b>	<b>-.08</b>	<b>.26</b>	<b>.87</b>	
<b>D</b>	<b>.46</b>	<b>.14</b>	<b>-.37</b>	<b>-.69</b>	<b>-.62</b>	<b>-.19</b>	<b>.42</b>	<b>.88</b>

Cronbach’s Alpha reliabilities are shown in bold along the diagonal, and the correlation coefficients among scales are shown within the body of the table. Correlation coefficients range from -1 to +1. A correlation of +1 indicates that two variables are perfectly positively correlated such that as one variable increases, the other variable increases by a proportional amount. A correlation of -1 indicates that two variables are perfectly negatively correlated, such that as one variable increases, the other variable decreases by a proportional amount. A correlation of 0 indicates that two variables are completely unrelated; N=752, as shown in Appendix 1 of the Everything DiSC Research Report.

A statistical technique called multidimensional scaling also adds support to the DiSC model as a circumplex. This technique has two advantages. First, it allows for a visual inspection of relationship among the eight scales. Second, this technique allows researchers to look at all of the scales simultaneously. In Figure 1, scales that are closer together have a stronger positive relationship. Scales that are farther apart are more dissimilar. The circumplex DiSC model predicts that the eight scales will be arranged in a circular format at equal intervals. As can be seen in Figure 1, the scales are arranged in a way that is expected by the DiSC model. (Keep in mind that the original MDS rotation is presented below and this rotation is arbitrary.) Although the eight

**FIGURE 1**



scales do not form a perfectly equidistant circle (as predicted (as predicted by the model), this theoretical ideal is nearly impossible to obtain with actual data. The actual distance between the scales, however, is roughly equal, providing strong support for the model and its assessment.

To learn more, visit [EverythingDiSC.com](http://EverythingDiSC.com).