

# The Big Five Personality Traits



Many contemporary personality psychologists believe that there are five basic dimensions of personality, often referred to as the "Big 5" personality traits. The five broad personality traits described by the theory are extraversion, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism.

You might find it helpful to use the acronym OCEAN (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) when trying to remember the big five traits.

## Openness

This trait features characteristics such as imagination and insight, and those high in this trait also tend to have a broad range of interests. People who are high in this trait tend to be more adventurous and creative. People low in this trait are often much more traditional and may struggle with abstract thinking.

People who are high on the openness continuum are typically:

- ✓ Very creative
- ✓ Open to trying new things
- ✓ Focused on tackling new challenges
- ✓ Happy to think about abstract concepts

Those who are low on this trait:

- Dislike change
- Do not enjoy new things
- Resist new ideas
- Not very imaginative
- Dislikes abstract or theoretical concepts

## Conscientiousness

Standard features of this dimension include high levels of thoughtfulness, with good impulse control and goal-directed behaviours. Highly conscientiousness tends to be organised and mindful of details.

Those who are high on the conscientiousness continuum also tend to:

- ✓ Spend time preparing
- ✓ Finish important tasks right away
- ✓ Pay attention to details
- ✓ Enjoy having a set schedule

People who are low in this trait tend to:

- Dislike structure and schedules
- Make messes and not take care of things
- Fail to return things or put them back where they belong
- Procrastinate important tasks
- Fail to complete the things they are supposed to do

## Extraversion

Extraversion is characterized by excitability, sociability, talkativeness, assertiveness, and high amounts of emotional expressiveness. People who are high in extraversion are outgoing and tend to gain energy in social situations. People who are low in extraversion (or introverted) tend to be more reserved and have to expend energy in social settings.

People who rate high on extraversion tend to:

- ✓ Enjoy being the centre of attention
- ✓ Like to start conversations
- ✓ Enjoy meeting new people
- ✓ Have a wide social circle of friends and acquaintances
- ✓ Find it easy to make new friends
- ✓ Feel energized when they are around other people
- ✓ Say things before they think about them

People who rate low on extraversion tend to:

- Prefer solitude
- Feel exhausted when they have to socialize a lot
- Find it difficult to start conversations
- Dislike making small talk
- Carefully think things through before they speak
- Dislike being the centre of attention

## Agreeableness

This personality dimension includes attributes such as trust, altruism, kindness, affection, and other prosocial behaviours. People who are high in agreeableness tend to be more cooperative while those low in this trait tend to be more competitive and even manipulative.

People who are high in the trait of agreeableness tend to:

- ✓ Have a great deal of interest in other people
- ✓ Care about others
- ✓ Feel empathy and concern for other people
- ✓ Enjoy helping and contributing to the happiness of other people

Those who are low in this trait tend to:

- Take little interest in others
- Don't care about how other people feel
- Have little interest in other people's problems
- Insult and belittle others

## Neuroticism

Neuroticism is characterised by sadness, moodiness, and emotional instability. Individuals who are high in this trait tend to experience mood swings, anxiety, irritability and sadness.

Individuals who are high in neuroticism tend to:

- Experience a lot of stress
- Worry about many different things
- Get upset easily
- Experience dramatic shifts in mood
- Feel anxious

Those who are low in this trait are typically:

- ✓ Emotionally stable
- ✓ Deal well with stress
- ✓ Rarely feel sad or depressed
- ✓ Don't worry much
- ✓ Very relaxed