

# ISFP– Typewatching Profile

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## *Sees Much But Shares Little*

Though they struggle constantly to maintain visibility, there is in the ISFP a love and sensitivity for others, as well as serenity and appreciation for life. The combination of Introversion, Sensing, Feeling, and Perceiving puts ISFPs more in touch with both themselves and the world around them than any other type.

ISFPs have a very low need to lead and control others, and yet driven by a desire to see everything—plants, animals, and people—living harmoniously. ISFPs are not invaders of any living creature’s space but instead want to relate to and encourage all life to fulfill its potential. As a result of being so much in tune with and respectful of the natural boundaries of life around them, it can become difficult for ISFPs to understand the need of some people to impose limits or structure on others. Unfortunately, in their desire not to influence, they often forgo expressing themselves and their wishes in favor of blending in with others. This non-imposing nature and seeming lack of direction is so much a part of ISFPs that they can easily be either overlooked or overpowered by others. In a sense, they are the most invisible of the sixteen types.

This type, often creative, artsy, and skilled in a variety of practical disciplines where people and nature are served, tends to be shy about offering his or her services—depriving the world of their contributions as a result. All too often, more aggressive, demanding and less capable types fill the void.

ISFPs may be unconventional in their approach to problem-solving, but not because they value contrariness as such or because they relish developing new ways of doing things. It happens because they see the clearest way to do something and then simply do it—often to the consternation of others who prefer to follow the prescribed methods. ISFPs are often oblivious to the “standard” way, indeed even puzzled by why anyone would consider doing something in a way that is obviously cumbersome and impractical.

Feeling (warm and nurturing) and Perceiving (open and flexible) are more traditionally feminine characteristics; Introversion (reflective and reserved) and Sensing (practical and grounded) are more traditionally masculine traits. Put the four together and you have a type who has little need to lead or influence, who relates to the world with little desire to change or control it, or even to understand it, but simply to take it all in. Thus, ISFPs of either gender do not project a strong image, nor are they competitive in nature.

Male ISFPs are successful and highly regarded in various roles, and if someone is looking for a nurturing male, this type is a natural. Both female and male ISFPs often sell themselves short. As a result, most any compliment an ISFP receives can be dismissed as “not really meant” or “just an accident.”

Parenting is an opportunity for an ISFP to relate to children, not to control them. As a result, children who also have strong Perceiving tendencies are probably allowed to wander too much; they may not be given the basic sense of structure that may be helpful later on. Judging children, by contrast, are often frustrated by the ISTP’s lack of

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direction and guidelines, which may set up the parents to feel like failures. They are not failures—they simply fail to offer much direction. Different types find it difficult to understand the ISFP's low need for control or influence. Clearly it is intended to allow others to grow more freely, although the ISFP's quiet, subtle style may never receive full credit.

Children learn that the ISFP parent is always near, very much in touch with the child's needs, and very supportive and loving of the child's development, but in a quiet and unassuming way. "Love" is not so much spoken of as displayed—quietly, and in myriad ways. "Nothin' says lovin' like something from the oven" could be an ISFP motto. The cookies or dollhouse furniture or handmade sweaters are symbols that say, "I love you." AN ISFP's child knows he or she is loved because in the kindly acts and gentle deeds, love is conveyed.

ISFPs' living style is generally relaxed but active. Hands-on activities keep these Sensors busy. Interestingly, this does not always involve "what needs to be done" as much as what they want to be doing. As Sensing-Perceivers, they usually prefer doing something to doing nothing, but the activity is often spontaneous and scattered rather than goal-oriented. While this can be a source of fun, the result may be a long list of unfinished activities that can be frustrating, not only to others but to ISFPs themselves.

To relax ISFP-style is to do something "for the fun of it." Such "fun" things might include gardening, painting, needlework, or whittling. Some ISFP hobbies, such as creating "miniatures," for example, often demand high dexterity.

ISFP children are often curious explorers who seem unhurried about getting anywhere in particular. Content with their own company, they see the entire world as a place for discovery. Often unaware of rules, time, and other family demands, they explore the world around them. Plants, animals, brothers, sisters, and parents are all part of that world.

As Perceivers, ISFP children march to a somewhat different drummer. They are likely to be playing when they are expected to be at meals, watching TV when everyone else is in the car ready to leave, or rearranging toys when company is about to walk in the door. They want very much to please but often go about it in such a way that the person to be pleased—parent, teacher, sibling, and so on—becomes impatient, even exasperated. The message the sensitive ISFP gets from these individuals is: "You never seem to do anything right!"

As Sensors, ISFPs are a very "now" type and so learning needs to be tactile and immediately relevant. They have little interest in the conceptual and abstract and are most responsive to what is pragmatic: "What does it look like?" "How does it feel?" "What can I do with it?" "How does it work?" Questions like these spark interest in a project; the theoretical side of things is more difficult, less interesting, and often produces very negative responses from ISFPs. Such responses often lead to negative labels—"slow learners" and "daydreamers," to cite a few. The labels are inaccurate, but they contribute to the ISFPs' tendency to avoid formal education, especially higher education.

Family events for ISFPs are best when they just "happen." Too much planning, work, and structure can block things from unfolding freely. Family rituals indeed merit attention, but only once they are in process. It is not uncommon for an ISFP to be doing something totally unrelated to an event minutes before it is supposed to begin.

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Somehow, ISFPs *know* that all will take care of itself if only they are sensitive to others' needs, in touch with their own feelings, and open to whatever happens. The occasion will be great—or at least long-remembered.

Bedtime for ISFPs is “when you're tired.” If there are projects, people, pets, or other forms of life that need attention, then bedtime may take second place. Once these other things are tended to, and *if* one is tired, it is time for sleep—whenever and wherever one happens to be. Again, others may find such behavior difficult, even “flaky.”

For ISFPs, work must be rewarding, and to be rewarding it must be personally gratifying and of use to others. Money is secondary; the primary concern is that service be rendered, to whomever or whatever requires it. If a great deal of formal education or abstract theory is necessary for a certain career choice, then ISFPs will likely seek fulfillment elsewhere. Vocational education, however, is often appealing for ISFPs who desire to work in the area of hands-on, practical trades and skills, including everything from car mechanics and repair to cosmetology, carpentry, and clerical tasks.

When they are enthusiastic about themselves and confident in their abilities, ISFPs find that their four preferences give them a natural edge to excel in a variety of vocations, including psychology, veterinary medicine, botany, and theology. When they make it to managerial levels, their styles tend to be nondirective. They create an open and diverse environment, which can be fertile ground for those subordinates capable of developing themselves.

ISFPs seem to carry this easygoing nature into maturity. Adapting to each day as it comes, with little need to plan, they tend to “wait, see, and hope for a surprise.” Retirement allows some special time for the kinds of hobbies that are open-ended and can result in high levels of personal satisfaction related to the process, not necessarily the product.

Two famous likely ISFPs include *Peanuts'* Charlie Brown (whose Introversions demands that he constantly rehearse what he will say to the little redheaded girl, but prevents him from actually delivering the goods, whose Feeling often raises the question, after he's been beaten badly in baseball, “How could we lose when we were so sincere?” and whose need for action *demands* that he try to kick a football, fully knowing Lucy will always foil him); and Saint Francis of Assisi (whose quiet, reflective way of relating to animals around him brought scorn and misunderstanding from his colleagues, but whose need to serve inspired an entire new order).

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