

ISTP– Typewatching Profile

Ready to Try Anything Once

ISTPs may best be described as reserved, aloof, and interpersonally cautious, yet ready to try almost anything once. They focus inward (Introversion) and when that tendency is coupled with their objective decision-making preference (Thinking), it is natural that they should be more inclined to wait and see where conversations may go or what others might do before tipping their own hands. Their view of the world is very concrete (Sensing) and that in combination with the open-ended way in which they relate to the outside world (Perceiving), can result in their taking a more active, spontaneous role than their apparently detached nature would seem to warrant. They may, for example, be prone to unexpected bursts of humor, a take-charge attitude, or a sudden drive to fix whatever's broken. Such displays of involvement often confuse others, keeping them off guard—which is exactly the way the ISTP feels most comfortable.

The motto, “Don’t tread on me,” could easily be of ISTP origin. It reflects that type in many ways. It could mean “Don’t tread on me because I don’t know how I’ll react,” or “Don’t do it because I wouldn’t think of doing it to you,” or “Don’t do it because it is a waste of time and energy.”

ISTPs are especially skilled with their hands and often get satisfaction from accomplishments that are both tactile and immediate. When *something*—as opposed to *someone*—needs attention, the ISTP’s powers of observation (related to both their Sensing and Perceiving preferences) make it possible for them to plunge into the task at hand without feeling it necessary to follow procedures or read directions. This is how the ISTP prefers to work, and when the result is success, the ISTP feels a wonderful sense of accomplishment. If, midway into a project, the need for directions becomes apparent, the ISTP will refer only to sections that are directly relevant, so that no time or energy is wasted—a matter of great consequence to ISTPs.

The ISTPs’ area of interest will take precedence over assigned tasks that are perceived as dull, boring, or not practical. They can become so engrossed with their own projects that other obligations, if not abandoned outright or forgotten, take second place. In situations that excite them, they work with great accuracy and precision, often to the amazement and envy of others. They thrive on and prefer “working on the edge,” even putting themselves at risk, if that’s what it takes to get the job done.

There are dramatic gender differences between male and female ISTPs. So much of the ISTP’s drive and gratification is related to activities traditionally associated with the male. Contact sports, heavy equipment, auto racing, carpentry, and other adrenaline-driving occupations are exciting and rewarding for the ISTP. Obviously, ISTP women who have the same tactile skills and satisfactions will be seen as tomboyish if they act on them.

The ISTP female who seeks more traditional channels for her preferences, such as homemaking, business, and accounting, may adhere to a more conventional female model while satisfying her need for immediate, tangible rewards. Life presents many demands for hands-on professional skills, which are sexually neutral as far as society is concerned. The ISTP female has many opportunities to fulfill her aspirations in the workplace and feels no less

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than 100 percent female in doing so. Problems are far more likely to arise in the social sphere. Cool, aloof, and socially cautious behavior combined with an interest in manual skills and activities may make people ill at ease with the ISTP girl or woman. Moreover, if she excels in any such activities, she can be downright threatening to her friends, partners, or colleagues.

Relating to ISTPs can be both fun and confusing—fun because of their spontaneous, easygoing view of life, confusing because of their mixed communication messages. Because ISTPs alternate between enthusiasm over things of immediate interest to them and quiet reserve about other things, one can never predict which reaction to expect from them.

ISTPs can often be enigmas, especially to Extraverts and Judgers, who find their unpredictability and apparent social indifference so disturbing that they may try to change them. Not only will the ISTP resent such impositions, he or she may get an inner thrill or satisfaction in not behaving according to expectations, always remaining somewhat mysterious.

ISTPs' nature is to be quietly observing, collecting data on all things at all times. They do not think of themselves as watching in order to do something with the information they are merely scanning the universe because it is part of their nature to want to take in all that is occurring. The often dramatic outcome, however, is that when an emergency occurs, they can move swiftly to the core of the problem and correct it. What seems like instinctive action is actually the result of long periods of observation that enabled the ISTP to be aware of all the details of the picture.

ISTP parents do not believe in planning. They tend to wait and see what each day brings, and then do what is needed at the time. ISTPs, in their general living and certainly in parenting, know that the best-laid plans go awry. Given that, the plan is not to have a plan, and expect that things will work out for the best as a result. Above all, they strive not to get excited, become emotional, or lose their cool, for good reason: It takes extra energy which, if expended, could make them less than ready for whatever will happen next.

ISTP parents are true to type with their low need to impose themselves on their children. Individualism, space, different levels of interest and development for each person in the family—these are the ISTP's values and much effort goes into living up to them in both word and action. When a conflict erupts, however, ISTPs may react with loud, explosive demands, which give way to calmer presentation of several alternatives once the ISTP has cooled off.

So strongly does this seemingly hands-off, laissez-faire style characterize the ISTP that the price can be isolation. ISTPs think each person should be afforded his or her own space (whatever it may be) and should enjoy or use that space according to individual tastes and desires. This emphasis on individual rights is much more important than neatness, orderliness, or routine—and that makes living with an ISTP quite challenging and varied, to say the least. But it does mean that those around the ISTP enjoy a high level of personal freedom. Whatever they need to establish their individuality and define their space, be it tomes of papers from a project, piles of material from a hobby, an automobile engine or two, or tubes of paint and stacks of canvas—the ISTP is more than willing to allow them, in return for reciprocal treatment.

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When not involved in an enterprise or adventure of the kind that compels all their attention, ISTPs relax. They do not unwind by engaging in the kind of routine chores that other types may find both relaxing and worthwhile. As a result, life is one long relaxation to the ISTP, frequently interrupted by various exciting hands-on challenges to repair, understand, improve, or experience whatever comes along.

Judging parents have great difficulty understanding ISTP children. Their yearning for new adventure and their fascination with the mechanical and sensual often separate them from other members of a family. By other types' standards, the ISTP child always seems to be heading for trouble—taking things apart to understand and learn about them, plunging in and trying things without first getting approval. They are often drawn to motorcycles (both to ride and to repair), which can cause concern within the family.

Learning is most enjoyable for the ISTP child when it is relevant and experiential. The ISTP believes that the only way to learn is by doing. The more abstract and removed from the immediate concerns of everyday life the learning becomes, the more restless and uninterested the ISTP student becomes. Hands-on projects, experiments, and other practically oriented experiences keep the ISTP involved and the course work palatable.

Family events are a mixed bag for the ISTP. The ISTP child and adult both may eagerly anticipate a special family event—Christmas, birthday, a reunion—although the activity of preparing for the event (baking a special cake or making and wrapping gifts) often holds more interest than the social demands and pressures of the event itself. Other types may see that behavior as uncaring or unsupportive or actively antisocial. This simply isn't true; it's just that the ISTP has little need for the social activities. When the event is over, the ISTP may encourage a few close friends to linger, and it is there that he or she experiences the “real” party; a good time with a few carefully chosen people.

Work that is routine (such as administration) or too open-ended (such as research) is of little interest to the ISTP. This kind of work is an energy drain. The new, the unexplored, and the unexpected, however, are energizing and really not considered by the ISTP to be “work” at all.

The later years of an ISTP's life may involve a new Extraverted focus and more time devoted to the family side of life. ISTPs may find appealing the chance to turn back to work on some of the activities that have unsuccessfully competed for their attention during the earlier part of life. Their senior citizenship may involve an acting-out of some idea or dream they have long had in mind but never had the time and energy to realize. *Now* is the time, and the ISTP will not only be ready but will greet the opportunity with the same sort of aloofness that has accompanied his or her earlier years.

Some famous likely ISTPs could include Burt Reynolds (who classifies himself as an Introvert and who is most comfortable playing high-risk daredevil, and athletic parts); and Red Adair (the guy who is constantly being whisked off to some risky assignment, such as hanging from a helicopter or capping a burning oil well, yet who shuns publicity and remains very private).

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