

# Off *the* shelf

*Simplicity is the final achievement. After one has played a vast quantity of notes and more notes, it is simplicity that emerges as the crowning reward of art.*

Frederic Chopin, composer

## A look at a book

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Mary McGuiness:

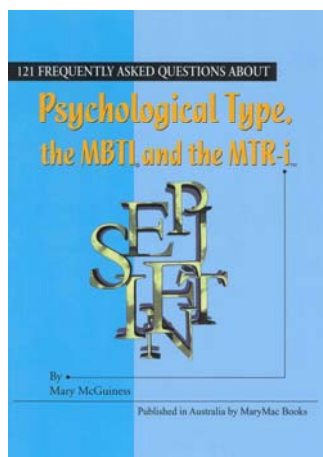
*121 frequently-asked questions about Psychological Type, the MBTI, and the MTR-i*

Epping, NSW: MaryMac Books

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Reviewed by

**Sarah Holmes**



Readers of the *Review* will know of Mary McGuiness's contribution to the Australian type community in delivering training programs for experienced practitioners and people new to type. She has been at the forefront of type education and awareness in Australia, and a leader of our national association for many years.

Mary's dedication to improving the quality and accessibility of resources for practitioners is seen in her book **121 Frequently-Asked Questions about Psychological Type, the MBTI and the MTR-i**. While it does not break new research or academic ground, it fills a major gap in the resources for new practitioners—particularly with the recent shifts in type education, whereby accreditation in both Step 1 and Step 2 can now be gained in a condensed five-day program.

Remembering back to my own accreditation with Dr Anne Russell, another major contributor to teaching and research into psychological type in this part of the world, after five days of training I felt incredibly under-prepared for working with real clients! What is it like for new practitioners? As a newly-accredited colleague put it: 'winging it' with the fear of making terrible mistakes, combined with the sheer excitement of working with people, using type to explore their development.

While mentoring is available in some settings, new practitioners often need to find their way flying solo. How can we support them, and help them to develop the skill and confidence to use type with elegance, care and impact?

The layers and complexity of type require time, quality resources, application in a safe environment free of fear of harming others, connection with other practitioners, and ongoing development, in order for novices to develop skill and depth in the use of type across many contexts.

There has been a gap in the resources for practitioners new to the concepts, research and applications of type. Mary McGuiness's earlier publication *You've Got Personality* improved the introductory texts available for accreditation programs and clients. Its beauty is in the simplicity of its explanations and instruction, which made it a popular resource for clients.

And the same applies to *121 Questions*, another step in filling the gap of available resources for practitioners and clients. Like *You've Got Personality*, it covers the history of type and the MBTI, basic type concepts, type dynamics and tips. While both books feature clarity of expression, a 'discovery' learning approach and language reflective of Australasia, *121 Questions* is written in a question-and-answer format. The highlight is its practical, easy-to-understand explanations of some of the more difficult concepts.

The table of contents reflects the book's thoughtful structure. Following the learning structure and sequence for qualifying programs, it covers history, theory, personality development, administration of the MBTI, results interpretation, teaching type theory, personality type and children, and applying type theory. It then also covers Step II and MBTI extension instruments such as the Management Team Roles Indicator (MTR-i) and the Ideal Team Profile Questionnaire (ITPQ).

As a resource for new practitioners, *121 Questions* provides a high degree of simplicity and clarity across a broad range of type-related topics. The 'Teaching Type Theory' section answers many questions about the 'how to' of holding a client feedback session.

As a type practitioner in an organisational and personal development context, I found the section on Type and Children a useful extension of my knowledge. Information relating to Attention Deficit Disorder and ADHD behaviour and its relationships to psychological type was explored.

The Q-and-A format is used consistently—perhaps rigidly—throughout the book. The content could be enhanced and enriched by more stories, examples of application to real life, pop-up highlight boxes, cartoons and similar devices.

Much of the content is not new. However, the presentation of theory, research and application may open up new information to practitioners, clients, and people simply seeking to understand more about type and the MBTI instrument.

The sections on the historical background to type and the MBTI are helpful in working with clients to gain an understanding of the indicator. In client settings, the book's short yet comprehensive coverage of topics could be supplemented with *Gifts Differing* and other materials.

As a resource for accreditation programs and for those new to type, *121 Questions* reads like a self-learning workbook, with content generally matching the learning sequence in accreditation programs. Its clarity of language and description is a standout feature. Examples and anecdotes weave the depth and complexity of type and the indicator, layering information on a solid foundation of knowledge.

And for experienced practitioners, this is a worthwhile resource for use with diverse groups and applications (organisations, families, career development, coaching), primarily to clearly explain type concepts and applications to clients. Examples to illustrate concepts are drawn from many contexts, including work, family, intimate relationships, children and groups. This reinforces the breadth of application of type and the indicator.

I found the book great! Perhaps due to my ISFP preferences, I particularly enjoyed the simplicity, clarity, structure, examples,

cartoons, and literal explanations. Readers with other preferences—particularly NP types—may struggle with the language and structure. The Q&A format requires perseverance to plough through.

Will my NF colleagues find the book un-inspiring? Will my NT colleagues be critical of the depth and exploration of theory and content? (*Seek simplicity, and distrust it*—Alfred North Whitehead, mathematician and philosopher.)

The Step 2 section is very brief, perhaps on the assumption that new practitioners will have texts that provide more relevant and detailed information.

The MTR-i and ITPQ sections provide minimal information. These instruments relate to team behaviours, rather than inherent personality preferences. The MBTI, MTR-i and ITPQ can be used as a package when working with teams. It feels as though these were tacked on as an afterthought. For future editions, a suggestion is to expand and further integrate the section comparing the MBTI with other instruments.

As a resource aimed at exploring applied concepts for new-ish practitioners, this book stays true to purpose and maintains a practical, applied focus. In filling a gap in the available learning resources, it can help to improve the capability and confidence of new practitioners. And it's suitable for diverse audiences and applications.

After completing MBTI training, some of my colleagues were afraid of using the indicator, judging themselves incompetent in their knowledge and understanding of the underlying concepts, as well as of the indicator itself. Unfortunately, some of them have consequently chosen to limit their use of the indicator.

I think that *121 Questions* could provide novices with guidance and examples to cement their understanding and build their confidence to use the indicator.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book. Whilst researching for this review, I looked forward to my train trips home from work for the chance to keep reading. ❖



**Sarah Holmes** (ISFP) has a background that includes working in local government, water and customer service organisations. She currently works in organisational and individual development and building workforce capability.

Sarah has qualifications in business and HR management, and is a professional member of the Australian Human Resources Institute. She is accredited in MBTI Step 2 and MTR-i Gold and uses them in her work with groups and individuals.

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