

## Compass Points: North, South, East, and West

### An Exercise in Understanding Preferences in Group Work

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*Developed in the field by educators.*

#### **Purpose**

Similar to the Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory, this exercise uses a set of preferences which relate not to individual but to group behaviors, helping us to understand how preferences affect our group work.

*Note: See the third page, Compass Points Explanations Expanded, for additional descriptions of the 4 preferences.*

#### **Process**

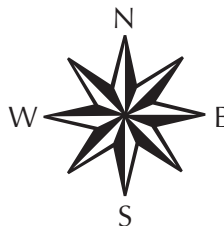
1. The room is set up with 4 signs on each wall — North, South, East, and West.
2. Participants are invited to go to the direction of their choice. No one is only one direction, but everyone can choose one as their predominant one.
3. Each direction group answers the 5 questions (see next page) on a sheet of newspaper. When complete, they report back to the whole group.
4. Processing can include:
  - Note the distribution among the directions: what might it mean?
  - What is the best combination for a group to have? Does it matter?
  - How can you avoid being driven crazy by another direction?
  - How might you use this exercise with others? Students?

#### **North**

*Acting — “Let’s do it”;  
likes to act, try things, plunge in*

#### **West**

*Paying attention to detail — likes to know the who, what, when, where and why before acting*



#### **East**

*Speculating — likes to look at the big picture and the possibilities before acting*

#### **South**

*Caring — likes to know that everyone’s feelings have been taken into consideration and that their voices have been heard before acting*

## **North, South, East, and West**

Decide which of the 4 directions most closely describes your personal style. Then spend 15 minutes answering the following questions as a group.

1. What are the strengths of your style? (4 adjectives)
2. What are the limitations of your style? (4 adjectives)
3. What style do you find most difficult to work with and why?
4. What do people from the other directions or styles need to know about you so you can work together effectively?
5. What do you value about the other 3 styles?



## Compass Points Explanation Expanded

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*Developed by Sue Horan, June, 2007.*

### **North**

- You take charge.
- You run the daily operation.
- You have lists of things to do and you need to get started and get them done.
- You get assignments in early.
- You don't have to ask questions to begin your work or assignment.
- You drive the work and get it done.
- You teach our children a complete curriculum.
- You will stitch the mosaic together and do the work.

### **East**

- You have the big picture, the frame that needs to be filled in.
- You need to see the final product and will work with the end in mind.
- You believe in working backwards, understanding by design.
- You don't get a project started until you are clear about the final product.
- You teach our children the big concepts.
- You know what the mosaic looks like in the end.

### **West**

- You ask the hard questions.
- You live by inquiry.
- You challenge us to identify the details.
- You don't start a project until you are clear about the details.
- You make our picture more complete.
- You lead by inquiry and engage in thoughtful discourse.
- You make us think and teach detailed concepts to our children.
- You fill in the details of the mosaic.

### **South**

- You take in the information, slow us down, and make sure everyone has voice and is heard.
- You include everyone, and make sure the human side is nurtured.
- You take care of us and bring up our affective domain.
- You make sure the emotional side of our work is heard.
- You make sure we are all included.
- You teach our children with strong relationships and care.
- You add beauty to the mosaic, make sure everyone participates in the creation, and keep us all comfortable.