



## **Locus Of Control & Attributional Style Test**

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## Summary

Locus of control refers to how a person perceives the cause of life events. Someone with an internal locus of control would generally perceive himself or herself as responsible for certain occurrences (his or her actions would have a direct bearing on the result). On the other hand, a person with an external locus of control would most often blame (or thank) fate, destiny, luck, society, or some other force beyond his or her control.

### Overall results



Your overall locus of control appears to be in the mid-range between an internal and external orientation. In general, you probably feel that while you can very well control and influence many aspects of your life, there are things that just happen to you that are outside of your personal control. People with an external LC tend to feel that they are prisoners of luck, fate, their genetic make-up, or socioeconomic status, rather than feeling that they have control over what happens in their lives. As a consequence, an external LC might lead to a rather fatalistic and passive attitude toward life. Perceived lack of control might lower or inhibit motivation, initiative, and willingness to take risks. Under such circumstances, chances of success can be diminished. People with internal LC, on the other hand, interpret outcomes as results of their own actions. They tend to take responsibility as well as credit for the results of their behavior, and are more proactive in general.

You seem to have struck a balance between the two ends of the spectrum. It is important to understand and accept one's own limits, but it is equally important not to give up without doing one's best. Even though equilibrium is good in general, try to shift your locus of control further toward the internal side, as most research points to this as being the healthier end of the spectrum.

## Introduction

Locus of control refers to how a person perceives the cause of life events. Someone with an internal locus of control would generally perceive himself or herself as responsible for certain occurrences (his or her actions would have a direct bearing on the result). On the other hand, a person with an external locus of control would most often blame (or thank) fate, destiny, luck, society or some other force beyond his or her control.

The development of locus of control stems from family, culture, and past experiences.

Different people credit different forces for life events such as personal successes and failures. For example, if a struggling actor does audition after audition only to be rejected time and time again, he might blame his own lack of ability ("I'm a terrible actor" or "Nobody likes my acting"). In this case, his locus of control for his failures would be internal. But if one day, this same actor were actually offered an acting job, he might place this success on circumstances beyond his control. He might not believe that his own performance, talent, hard work, or exceptional persistence got him the job, but would rather make rationalizations against his own effort ("I was probably the only one to audition" or "Gosh, that was a stroke of luck"). When it comes to success, he believes that he has no say in what happens - he is merely a helpless participant in a fate determined by random circumstances. Evidently, one can have a different locus of control for personal successes than for personal failures.

Intricately entwined in one's locus of control is the attribution style. Attribution style determines whether an individual attributes successes and failures to internal or external, stable or unstable forces. For example, a student who scores low on her SATs might feel that she was particularly fatigued that day. She attributes her failure to unstable internal forces, which suggests that if she were given another try, she might not be so tired, and thus would hopefully receive a higher score.

There is a certain tried-and-true recipe for coping with the challenges and stresses of life. In fact, research has shown that in academics, athletics, and other competitive fields, a particular locus of control is more likely to encourage achievement. Overall, it is best to attribute successes in life to stable internal forces. For example, a public speaker who concludes his first speech to uproarious applause would do best to thank his own orating abilities, writing skills, and sense of humor. He would also benefit by believing that he could do it again if he had to.

When it comes to failures, however, it is wise to adopt another strategy. Those who feel that they fell on their face (figuratively speaking) due to unstable and even external forces tend to be better off. For example, it is healthiest for an athlete to blame a slight headache or tension (both are unstable internal forces), poor weather conditions, or bad shoes (both are unstable external forces) for coming up short of the mark. By doing so, the athlete is maintaining a fundamental confidence in her own abilities, since presumably the headache will go away, she can relax, wear different shoes, or the conditions will be better next time. With a basic faith in her capability, she will feel motivated to try again. In short, it is important to internalize success, but NOT failure.

Unfortunately, there are limitations. While it is best to thank your own talent and abilities for success and to blame failure on something out of your control, it is also important to remain firmly grounded. It is of no benefit to miss out on learning from your mistakes because you consistently blame society or bad luck for your failures. Nor is it useful to be totally blind to your own limitations (we all have them) or lack of effort. There are obvious advantages to realizing where you might have come up short in an instance of failure; you can go about fixing the problem in order to heighten the probability of success the next time. To find this balance, one needs a healthy sense of self and a reasonable grasp on reality.

It is possible that you do not have the same orientation in all areas of your life - perhaps you've always felt in control of your academics and are confident about your intellectual ability, but feel that social relationships are not within your personal power. Your test results will provide information about your locus of control in a variety of areas.

Graphs

Overall results



*Success Orientation*



*Success Stability*



*Failure Orientation*



*Failure Stability*



*Global Locus of Control*



*Impact of Upbringing and Heredity*



*Belief in Luck or Destiny*



*Self-efficacy*



*Career or Academic-related Locus of Control*



*Relationship Locus of Control*



*Health-related Locus of Control*



**Impression Management**



## Details

### Overall results (score 62)

Your overall locus of control appears to be in the mid-range between an internal and external orientation. In general, you probably feel that while you can very well control and influence many aspects of your life, there are things that just happen to you that are outside of your personal control. People with an external LC tend to feel that they are prisoners of luck, fate, their genetic make-up, or socioeconomic status, rather than feeling that they have control over what happens in their lives. As a consequence, an external LC might lead to a rather fatalistic and passive attitude toward life. Perceived lack of control might lower or inhibit motivation, initiative, and willingness to take risks. Under such circumstances, chances of success can be diminished. People with internal LC, on the other hand, interpret outcomes as results of their own actions. They tend to take responsibility as well as credit for the results of their behavior, and are more proactive in general.

Overall score on the external vs. internal locus of control spectrum.

You seem to have struck a balance between the two ends of the spectrum. It is important to understand and accept one's own limits, but it is equally important not to give up without doing one's best. Even though equilibrium is good in general, try to shift your locus of control further toward the internal side, as most research points to this as being the healthier end of the spectrum.

### Success Orientation (score 61)

You have a mixed attribution style when it comes to success. Sometimes you interpret your success as a result of your skills, intelligence, nice personality, etc. Other times, you attribute it to external factors, such as luck, ease of task, or other people's help. As a consequence, you don't always take the credit you deserve. Your self-esteem, motivation, and general well-being would most likely be improved if you realized that you actively influence positive events in your life.

Assesses whether you attribute successes to internal factors (those under your control) or external factors (those beyond your control).

### Success Stability (score 35)

Your responses also showed that you tend to attribute your success to unstable factors, such as luck or effort. It would be more beneficial to your self-esteem to assign credit to your intelligence, personality, or other stable attributes.

Assesses whether you attribute success to stable or unstable factors.

***Failure Orientation (score 50)***

You have a mixed attribution style when it comes to failure. Sometimes, you interpret your failure as a result of lack of ability, insufficient effort, or other internal causes. Other times, you attribute it to external factors, such as bad luck or task difficulty. Attributing failure to external forces can be useful in terms of protecting your self-confidence, provided that the external factors are perceived as controllable and changeable. However, if the external factors are perceived as a given, bred in the bones, and uncontrollable, external interpretation of failures can lead to frustration and resignation. When you attribute failure to unstable internal sources (e.g. a lack of effort) it can help you to mobilize your strengths and increase your motivation in future encounters with similar situations. On the other hand, attributing failure to stable internal forces can be damaging to your self-esteem, perception of self-efficacy, and motivation.

Extent to which you attribute failures to factors within your control (internal) or factors beyond your control (external).

***Failure Stability (score 17)***

You tend to attribute your failures to unstable forces, such as lack of effort or bad luck. This is fortunate because believing that failures are due to stable forces (i.e., those that are not amenable to change) can lead to hopelessness.

Assesses whether you attribute failure to stable or unstable forces.

***Global Locus of Control (score 60)***

While you likely feel that you could have some impact on the world's problems if you made an effort, you seem to believe that some issues are out of your hands. This selective attitude might keep you from fighting certain issues even if they bother you. Remember that every bit helps.

Evaluates whether you perceive that you can make a difference in the world.

***Impact of Upbringing and Heredity (score 75)***

You seem to feel as though you can overcome most limitations posed by your background and genetics, but perhaps not all. You realize the importance of maintaining a positive attitude and being persistent. Virtually all weaknesses can be eliminated or at least improved with work.

Assesses whether you feel that you can overcome issues caused by your upbringing and/or genes.



***Belief in Luck or Destiny (score 56)***

You believe that while some events that happen in your life are determined by your behavior and the amount of effort you put in, others come about thanks to luck and being in the right place at the right time (or being in the wrong place at the wrong time). You believe in luck or destiny but also think it's important to put in a good day's work.

Extent to which you believe that luck, fate, or destiny are at work in determining what happens in your life.

***Self-efficacy (score 92)***

The concepts of locus of control and self-efficacy are closely interrelated. However, while locus of control generally refers to how much a person feels in control over the outcome of his/her efforts, self-efficacy refers to whether he/she *believes* in his/her abilities. In your case, it seems as though you have excellent self-efficacy. You believe in your abilities and feel that you are capable of handling whatever life throws at you with ease.

Extent to which you have faith in your abilities and believe you are capable of changing your situation.

***Career or Academic-related Locus of Control (score 75)***

You generally tend to believe that career or academic achievement is within your control. You likely feel that your ability or drive can see you through almost any setback or challenge.

Measures whether you feel professional or academic success is under your control.

***Relationship Locus of Control (score 90)***

You appear to feel very much in control of what other people think of you or how well your relationships go. This means that you most likely believe that by treating others with respect and being upbeat and positive, you can have more successful relationships and be well liked.

Assesses your locus of control related to relationships.

***Health-related Locus of Control (score 67)***

You generally feel that how you behave in the present can have an impact on your health in both the short and long-term. However, you also feel that some aspects of your health and some illnesses can strike at random without cause. Be sure to take part in healthy behaviors, such as eating well, exercising, or doing screening tests appropriate for your age and gender.

Measures whether you believe that your level of health is under your control.

***Impression Management (score 43)***

Research shows that people tend to respond in a socially-desirable manner when answering questions related to locus of control. To some extent this appears to be the case with you, but only slightly. Reflect upon your scores and consider whether they are really an accurate representation of you.

Measures whether a test-taker answered honestly, or in a socially-desirable manner.

## Strengths & Limitations

Below you will find a summarized list of your results, classified as Strengths, Potential Strengths, and Limitations.

### Strengths

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- You have an internal locus of control when it comes to your career or academics
- You have an internal locus of control when it comes to your personal relationships
- You tend to think that it is possible to overcome limitations caused by one's upbringing or genetics
- You have a good sense of self-efficacy; you feel that you have the ability to be successful in life and fight against challenges

### Potential Strengths

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- Your locus of control is a mix of internal and external
- You attribute some successes in your life to internal causes such as intelligence, ability, or self-discipline, but others to external causes such as luck or ease of the task
- You attribute some failures in your life to internal causes and others to external causes
- You feel that you can have an impact on some world affairs, but believe that others are out of your control
- You feel that while some things in life are dictated by luck or chance, others are well within your control
- Your locus of control related to your health is mixed, meaning that you think you have control over some aspects of your well-being, but others are out of your hands

### Limitations

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- No limitations detected

Health locus of control is the general expectancy that one's behavior either is or is not directly related to one's health outcomes.

## Advice

To change your locus of control, you need to do a little work. This type of reflection and examination of your self-perception will benefit you in many different parts of your life. In fact, this is some of the most important self-growth work you can do ? it's well worth the effort! So check out the tips below on how to change a self-defeating locus of control.

- **Work on your self-image.** Stop the automatic thinking that discounts your own talents, skills, efforts, and abilities. First of all, try some serious reflection on how you perceive yourself. Note your own negative self-impressions. Write down what your strong points are, list your skills, your abilities, and any "special talents" that you might have. Next, explore all of your successes. Don't ignore the "small" accomplishments. You might have to rearrange your thinking for this so you won't neglect to include such things as "helped friend through crisis" or "completed difficult math course with acceptable grades". Don't be hard on yourself or gauge your successes by somebody else's measure! Examine your own qualities that contributed to your success on these occasions. Explore why you should be proud of yourself and review this list often.

- **Keep a journal of your thoughts, moods, and daily activities.** Observe your automatic reactions to life events and how you feel about yourself in daily life. If you make what you believe is a horrendous mistake and feel like the biggest dummy on the planet, write down the event, how you feel about yourself and how you interpret the situation. Most likely, you blame yourself for the mistake and chalk it up to another failure that is your fault. Stop seeing things through your own self-scathing eyes and do some serious reality checking. Try to think of the situation from other perspectives. How might someone else perceive your mistake? If an admired teacher or friend made the same mistake, would you think it was because he or she was dumb or incapable? Write down these observations also.

- **Take a reality check.** With your feet firmly planted in a broader reality, take some serious time to determine the actual causes of your mistake. If there are things that can be changed in the future (inattentiveness, lack of knowledge, etc.), then make the effort to do better next time (but don't obsess over your mistake - remember, everyone makes them and they are actually essential to improvement). But if you can't do anything to avoid similar failures in the future, then move on! If you really are too short to be the Slam Dunk World Champion, you would do best to keep "slam-dunking" as a hobby, examine other talents and proceed in a different direction! It is important to know and to accept your limitations, albeit not too hastily.

- **Don't generalize setbacks that happen to you in your life.** When something bad happens to you (you fail a test, do poorly on an assignment at work, or a friend or family member gets sick) do you start to think that you never do anything right or that bad things are always happening to you? Thinking this way can lead to a sense of hopelessness. Remember that you can almost always turn things around with hard work, and even the toughest situations usually get better. Refuse to think in black and white terms such as "always" and "never".

- **Eliminate "cognitive shortcuts".** Cognitive shortcuts are the modes of thinking that you tend to get stuck in. For instance, you might automatically blame the fact that you haven't had a steady relationship in two years on your looks or personality. You might think, "I'm unattractive" or "I have no charisma". These negative thoughts are surefire success killers. In short, you are single-handedly extinguishing your hopes and dreams by convincing yourself of these ridiculous judgments that have no bearing on reality. What happens is that you fulfill your own prophecy by telling the world (in indirect ways) that you are indeed ugly and boring. The solution is to learn to rewire your brain. Become aware of your negative thoughts and replace them with positive thoughts. Or, every time you think something negative about yourself, stop yourself with a pre-determined buzzword. For example, you might say (quietly to yourself if you are in public), "Stop!" or "Enough!"