

Do You Have an Internal or External Locus of Control?

by Amy Scholten, M.P.H.

Do you attribute success and failure to your own behavior or to forces outside your control? Your answer to that question depends on whether you have an internal or external locus of control. Locus of control plays a role in our long-term success in life as well as our ability to handle stress. The purpose of this assessment is to help you determine whether you have an internal or external locus of control and what that means.

Directions: Please read each statement carefully and choose the answer (a or b) that describes how you *typically* think or feel. Please keep in mind that this is a *general* assessment, not a diagnostic tool. When finished, you can interpret your score at the bottom of the page.

1. a) Most effort, hard work and accomplishments go unnoticed.
 b) Success in life depends a lot on how much effort we put into things.
2. a) Many of life's disappointments are the result of bad luck.
 b) Disappointments often stem from our own mistakes.
3. a) Health is largely determined by genes.
 b) Health is largely determined by lifestyle.
4. a) Most people get promotions at work because their boss likes them or they know the right people.
 b) Most people get promotions at work because they work hard.
5. a) Academic success is largely determined by one's socioeconomic background.
 b) Academic success is largely determined by perseverance and hard work.
6. a) People tend to be happy because they have a good life and things come easy to them.
 b) People tend to be happy because they can see the positive side of most circumstances.
7. a) Powerful people make most of the decisions. Average people have little influence.
 b) A single person can have an impact on major policies and decisions.
8. a) What happens to us is mostly a matter of fate.
 b) What happens to us is mostly a matter of our choices.
9. a) Crime and violence exist, no matter what we do.
 b) We can greatly reduce crime and violence.

10. a) We have little control over whether people like us or not.
b) Likeability is a matter of good interpersonal skills and knowing how to get along with others.
11. a) Personality is pretty much influenced by hereditary factors and upbringing– there’s not much we can do about it.
b) People can change their personalities and behavior patterns.
12. a) Being in the right place at the right time is most important for getting what you want in life.
b) Realistic goals and perseverance are most important for getting what you want in life.
13. a) Getting a job depends mostly on *who* you know, not what you know.
b) Getting a job depends mostly on your interviewing skills and your abilities.
14. a) Good leaders are born that way, not made that way.
b) Good leaders are those who have developed their skills and taken advantage of their opportunities.

Scoring

Number of a and b Answers	Point Value for Answers	Total Point Value (multiply total number of a and answers by their corresponding point value)
Number of a answers:	All a answers = 2 points	
Number of b answers:	All b answers = 1 point	
		Score (add total of a and b points):

Your Score	Interpretation
14-16	Your score suggests that you have a strong internal locus of control . People with this orientation typically feel that they have a lot of control over their lives. They tend to work hard and engage in activities that improve their situation. As a result, they are often successful. However, people with this

	orientation need to be careful that they don't trample on others. They may come across as arrogant and controlling.
17-21	Your score suggests that you have a moderate internal locus of control . You're aware that you have control over many aspects of your life, but sometimes you feel powerless.
22-28	Your score suggests that you have an external locus of control . People with this orientation typically feel that their fate is in the hands of outside forces and that they have little influence. This can lead to passive behavior and feelings of helplessness, hopeless, and stress. You can help yourself by realizing that many times you do have a choice. Work on developing goal-setting, decision-making and problem-solving skills. This will help you to feel more confident and in control of what happens to you.

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Biography

Amy Scholten, MPH, has a Master of Public Health in health promotion and education from the University of South Carolina and a Bachelor of Science in food and nutrition from Framingham State College. She is a freelance health writer and has taught stress management at Ithaca College in Ithaca, NY, USA.