

Reach Out!

A Center Linking College and Community Mentors with Children and Teens

Learning Styles Workshop Preview

Introduction

How do you prefer to learn?

You might get a handle on your unique and preferred learning style(s) by looking at where and when you have most loved, remembered, and used “learning.” Consider a broad range of learning experiences including—and surely going beyond—formal education and classes. How did you learn to bike, swim, golf, canoe, bowl, or ski? Reflect on the crafts and hobbies you enjoy. Or, how did you learn to play video games, use that new iPod or digital camera? How did you learn to cook, sew, play board or card games? Can you remember how you learned to tie your shoes, blow bubbles with bubble gum, or even read and write cursively?

What we do or do not learn surely relates to our personal interest in the topic or skill, prior preparation, or life experiences. But, perhaps even more importantly, we will learn best when the mentor, parent, teacher or coach provides experiences that match our “style.”

Doing some learning-style research and surveys can help us begin to understand how we are individually wired to learn, what our preferences are for learning, and hopefully it will give us insight into how we can heighten learning and choose educational settings that best fit us. We live in an education-based economy. Lifelong learning and training will be a given in our lives. It is critical that we know how we learn best!

Concept of Learning Styles

Learning styles are our individual and preferred ways for “learning.”

There are many definitions for “learning styles.” Research abounds from “way back when” to now on just what learning styles are, how we come to learn, and what is best to do with the whole area of individual “style.” Bottom line: we all come to process, perceive, retain, and utilize knowledge, skills and information in a myriad of learning approaches and experiences.

We encourage everyone to explore and gain insights on learning styles for the goal of becoming better at “teaching” others as well as for the pursuit of individual learning.

Some Principles for Various Learning Style Approaches

Let's take a look at just a few different ways of looking at our "style." There surely is no broad agreement on what learning styles are. We just know that we have them!

Right and Left Brain View

Some consider our preferred learning style to be connected to which side of our brain we engage to process information, gain skills, or broaden knowledge. Typical principles for each side of the brain:

Left Brain Learners	Right Brain Learners
In social setting, remember names	Remember faces more so than names
More analytical in reading	More intuitive in reading
When solving a problem, use logic and proceed in sequential, orderly manner	Look at the whole problem and may see answer but not do the orderly process
Prefer multiple choice tests	Prefer essays or projects
Do well on standardized tests	Do poorly on standardized tests
Highly auditory and visual	Highly kinesthetic and experiential

4 Basic Learners: Relational, Analytical, Structured, & Energetic

Category	Characteristics
Relational Learner	Asks "why?" Enjoys partner and group experiences. Creative. Possesses innate "people skills." Spontaneous. Preferred senses: Auditory, Sensual, Visual.
Analytical Learner	Asks "what?" Prefers to work/learn alone. Enjoys theories. Logical. More comfortable with numbers and computers than with people. Highly Visual.
Structured Learner	Asks "how does this work?" Enjoys hands-on projects. Likes problem solving. Wants order/structure in learning. Visual and tactile.
Energetic Learner	Asks "what can this do?" Searches for new ways. Bored with repetition, likes change. Hands-on. Enjoys trial and error, experimentation. Tactile and auditory.

Preferred Senses for Learning

We can also examine our preferences for "the 5 senses." Few examples are:

Visual learners enjoy reading books, magazines, or newspapers; watching movies and TV. Tend to remember what they can picture in their minds.

Auditory learners listen carefully to others' presentations and conversations. They can discern important points in a lecture. Learn from tapes, radio; tend to remember things like song lyrics.

Tactile learners enjoy hands-on projects and experiential learning. Remember best the skills and knowledge they used and applied rather than read or heard in a lecture. Like to be physically active.

Conclusion

There are many perspectives on learning styles. We hope that everyone in *Reach Out* will take the time to ponder and reflect on personal “styles.” This knowledge enables us to better help one another with studying and memorizing, taking notes, preparing for various kinds of tests, and learning for meaning. Sometimes the way we try to tutor or coach someone about learning something makes absolutely no sense to the other person. In fact, sometimes when we push our learning style and approach on someone really different from ourselves, we can confuse them and do more harm than good! Often we struggle to study or learn from someone else because we really have different styles.

If we are in a class where the teacher primarily uses lecture and multiple-choice tests for evaluation, and this isn’t our “style,” we need to work together to figure out strategies to survive and do well in the class. Some of us may learn very well by working with someone else or in a study group; others will disdain the time spent on group work. Hopefully you are getting the gist of what we need to do—encourage each other to know how we each are wired to learn so that we can be more active and successful in our learning.

Professors at North Carolina State have a learning style inventory we enjoy using to help us look at “learning styles” from yet a different vantage point. You will be taking this survey and learning even more about ways to comprehend your own and others’ styles.

The following worksheet introduces you to their basic categories for looking at learning styles. Remember that we often tap different styles of learning for different situations and kinds of learning. And many of us have “learned” to become adept auditory learners from being in school and college classes over a long period of time. The educational system doesn’t offer choices, for example, for learning a subject in multiple ways. We tend to believe that most of us can learn almost anything if we see some relevancy and we get to learn in our preferred “style!”

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Worksheet: Learning Styles

Name: _____

Date: _____

Partner: _____

1. Look at this chart for another approach to think about learning style preferences. Place an "x" if you definitely have a preference in the space provided. If you can't easily make up your mind, place an "x" in the middle.

Active Learners

___ Like to "do something" to learn

___ Enjoy discussions and projects

?

Reflective Learners

___ Like to learn from lectures.

___ Enjoy private time to think things through.

Sensing Learners

___ Like to learn facts

___ Want to see how learning is relevant

Intuitive Learners

___ Like to discover new things.

___ Enjoy learning for learning's sake.

Visual Learners

___ Learn best from pictures, charts, diagrams

___ Like to make study outlines

Verbal Learners

___ Learn best from words spoken or written

___ Like to study by talking about material with someone

Sequential Learners

___ Like to see things in orderly steps

___ Tend to learn skills one piece at a time

Global Learners

___ Prefer to look at "big picture"

___ Tend to learn randomly and in fits and starts until they "just get it"

2. Share with a partner what you are learning about your personal learning style.