

# Understanding Your Learning Styles



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# **An Introduction to Understanding Learning Styles**

## **Introduction**

Have you ever wondered why you perform better under the tutelage of one instructor versus another in the exact same subject? The answer very well could lie in the way the instructor presents the information and the type of learning style that best meets your needs. Everyone has a different learning style and learns better through different means.

Understanding your particular learning style and how to best meet the needs of that learning style is essential to performing better in the classroom. Once you have unlocked your learning style and discovered the best methods for helping you to learn through that style, you may be surprised to discover just how well you can flourish in the classroom, even in subjects that you previously found difficult.

## **What are Learning Styles?**

Before we delve into how to best benefit from identifying your learning style, we need to spend a few moments studying the different types of learning styles and how to best identify which learning style category you fit into.

Learning styles refer to the variations in your ability to accumulate as well as assimilate information. Basically, your learning style is the method that best allows you to gather and use knowledge in a specific manner. Most experts agree that there are three basic learning styles. Each individual may possess a single style or could possess a combination of different learning styles. In most cases, the characteristics of a learning style can even be observed at a relatively young age.

Once you have identified your particular learning style you will be able to identify ways in which you can adapt the learning process and your studies to maximize your education.

## **Visual Learners**

Individuals who fall into this category typically learn through what they are able to see with their own eyes. Visual learners are those students who jockey for the positions at the front of the class, must have front row theater seats and love to be right up front for sporting events in order to obtain the best view.

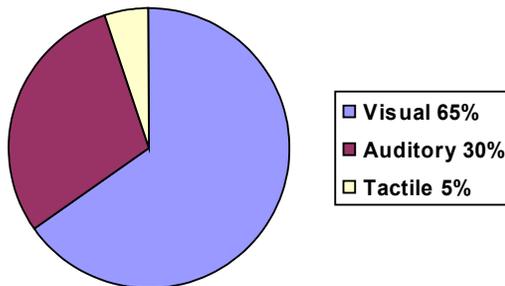
Visual learners have a tendency to describe everything that they see in terms of appearances. These learners love visual aids such as photos, diagrams, maps and graphs. Visual learners frequently are good writers and will commonly perform quite well on written assignments.

## **Auditory Learners**

Auditory learners are very good listeners. They tend to absorb information in a more efficient manner through sounds, music, discussions, teachings, etc. These individuals will be more likely to record lectures so that they can replay them at a later time for study purposes. Auditory learners appreciate books on tape and may find that reading aloud will help them to retain information. Rather than written reports, auditory learners tend to do better on oral presentations and reports.

## Kinesthetic Learners

Kinesthetic learners are tactile learning. This means that they learn best through moving, doing, acting out and touching. Projects that are hands-on in nature are best for kinesthetic learners. Kinesthetic learners tend to become frustrated when they must sit for long periods of time. They enjoy conducting experiments, exploring and performing tasks.



## Identify your Learning Style

Based on the information just presented, are you able to determine which learning style category you fall into? Sometimes it is quite easy to determine and you may have already had an idea that you might have a particular learning style. In other cases, it may not be quite so easy to identify. This is commonly the case if you possess characteristics from more than one learning style.

Below is a quiz that can help to guide you through the process of identifying your specific learning style.

## **Benefits of Understanding your Learning Style**

It is important to keep in mind that you as an individual are a unique learner. No two people are exactly the same and no two people learn in exactly the same manner. There are many advantages to understanding the way in which you are able to process information most efficiently. Some of these benefits include:

### Academic Advantages

- Maximizing your learning potential
- Succeed on all educational levels
- Understand how to best study and score better on exams and tests
- Overcome limitations in the classroom
- Reduces frustration and stress levels
- Expand your existing learning strategies

### Personal Advantages

- Improve your self-confidence and self-esteem
- Learn how to best use your brain
- Gain insight into your own strengths as well as weaknesses
- Learn how to enjoy learning more
- Develop a motivation for learning
- How to maximize your natural abilities and skills

## Professional Advantages

- Stay up to date on professional topics
- Gain an edge over the competition
- Manage teams in a more effective manner
- Learn how to deliver more effective presentations
- Improve your sales skills
- Increasing your earning power

Keep in mind that there is really no right or even no wrong way to learn. Everyone is unique and each learning style offers advantages as well as disadvantages. Understanding your own learning style can help you to learn as well as work in a more efficient manner.

Now that you understand your own unique learning style, we are going to examine each learning style more closely and learn what steps you can take in order to improve your learning strategies based on that learning style.

## **Visual Learners**

Many students discover that they are visual learners. It is estimated that approximately 65% of the population are visual learners. These students commonly use visual aids, such as graphs and diagrams, to assist them in putting material into perspective. Such visual aids can make it much easier to remember content later than if they had just heard the information.

Visual learners need to see material in order to understand it. Such learners typically have problems with directions that are spoken and may also have

difficulty following lectures or even misinterpret words. Individuals who fall into the visual learning category must process information with their eyes. They learn by reading or observing and as a result they are typically good at seeing pictures in their minds of pictures, people, places and sometimes even words.

They are able to remember how a word looks rather than the sequence of a word or how to sound it out. Visual learners are typically quite good at using graphs and maps and tend to make sure they have something to read when traveling. They also have a proclivity for doing a lot of research before embarking on any trip or major change within their lives.

Visual learners tend to exhibit these characteristics:

- Loves magazines, books and other types of reading materials
- Relate best to information that is written, such as graphs, maps, diagrams, charts, highlighted notes, flashcards, etc.
- Feel frustrated when unable to take notes
- May demonstrate outstanding photographic memory
- Can remember precisely where information is located on a page
- Must have a quiet place to study
- Benefits from making their own notes, even from information that is already printed
- Has difficulty following lectures that are long
- Tends to be good at spelling
- Tends to be detail oriented
- Typically tidy and organized
- Often asks for verbal directions to be repeated

- Must observe instructor's body language and facial expressions
- Concentrates better with a clear line of sight to visual aids

## **Visual Learning Tips**

In order to maximize your learning style, concentrate on these tips:

- Ask for written directions
- Utilize diagrams and flow charts for note taking
- Color code notes
- Visualize spelling of words or facts that must be memorized
- Write down key points
- Copy what is on the board
- Sit near the front of the classroom
- Watch videos
- Use highlighters to mark important points in notes
- Use graph paper in order to make diagrams and charts for key points
- Utilize illustrations to remember important material
- Utilize visual metaphors to associate relevant content
- Write down explanations for points that are difficult

Preferred test styles for visual learners are essays, maps and diagramming.

Worst test type for visual learners-listen and respond style.

## **Auditory Learners**

Auditory or verbal learners are those who prefer to hear materials as they are spoken, such as in a lecture format. It is estimated that auditory learners comprise about 30% of the population. These learners commonly find they are best able to recall information after it has been spoken rather than through reading it.

Individuals with an auditory or verbal learning style typically exhibit the following characteristics:

- Frequently talkative in class
- Learn most effectively through audio books, lectures, oral presentations and verbal instructions
- Information usually has little relevance unless it is heard
- Prefer presenting oral reports rather than written reports
- Enjoy debates and discussions
- Benefits from reading aloud
- Able to follow verbal directions better than written directions
- Tends to memorize well
- Able to remember names well
- Prefer listening to the news
- Does not automatically understand maps, diagrams or graphs
- Enjoys speaking with others
- Enjoys music
- Sings frequently
- Often good at foreign languages

- Must repeat information such as phone numbers
- Benefits from study groups
- Reads slowly
- Tends to be an articulate speaker
- Unable to keep quiet for very long

### **Learning Tips for Auditory Learners**

Individuals who are auditory learners may be able to benefit from the following study strategies:

- Utilize audiotapes for learning
- Read information aloud when studying
- Ask questions
- Watch videos
- Use word association techniques to remember facts
- Participate in class discussions
- Record directions and notes
- Listen to taped notes
- Avoid auditory distractions
- Participate in a study group or study with a study partner
- Make up songs or rhymes to go along with the pertinent material
- Use rhymes to recall dates, names, facts, etc.
- Write out steps in sentence form and then read them out loud

Best test style for auditory learner-oral exam, writing responses to lectures

Worst test style for auditory learner-reading comprehension

## **Kinesthetic/Tactile Learning Style**

It is estimated that about 5% of the population are kinesthetic or tactile learners. The kinesthetic learning style refers to the ability to absorb information best by experiencing, touching, doing, moving and being active in some manner. Persons who fall into this category prefer situations which are hands-on and which provide them with the opportunity to assemble parts and take part in a physical activity.

Kinesthetic learners tend to be touchers or feelers. They process information through the sense of touch, such as by feeling shapes and textures. While they may take a lot of notes or doodle while attending lectures or even while simply thinking something through, often they will not refer to the notes again.

Learners in this category tend to be quite in touch with their own feelings. When speaking with someone they frequently have the tendency to touch the other person on the shoulder or the arm. They may also stand quite close. Kinesthetic learners also usually have a tendency to handle something or fidget with something.

Experiential and hands-on learning activities are usually the best method for this type of learner, such as lab work, role playing and making models. In addition, kinesthetic learners will usually need to take frequent study breaks in order to avoid becoming easily distracted or bored. A computer can also be useful with this learning style, particularly for reinforcing information through the sense of touch.

Within the kinesthetic learning style, there is also a sub-category known as interactive learning. Interactive learners frequently find that they lose attention easily. Like kinesthetic learners they tend to become distracted or bored very easily within lectures. These individuals often learn best when they are in situations in which they can actually perform or do something. They frequently must re-write notes in their own words in order to recall relevant facts.

Kinesthetic learners often exhibit the following characteristics:

- Enjoy action, experiences, discovery
- Remember best by manipulating things, using tools, etc.
- Enjoy concept demonstrations
- Able to master skills through practice and imitation
- Benefits from hands-on teaching techniques
- Learns well from excursions and field trips
- Tends to collect items
- Handwriting often not good
- Weak at spelling
- Uses hands to communicate and talks fast
- Benefits from role-playing situations
- Good at sports
- Enjoys having music playing in the background while working or studying
- Takes frequent breaks while studying
- Often good at playing a musical instrument
- Often good at dance, martial arts

- Enjoys arts and crafts, science experiments, etc.
- Becomes restless during long lectures
- Often touches others in a gesture of friendship
- Able to learn best when able to freely move about
- Often studies most effectively while lying down, fiddling with objects, etc.

### **Learning Tips for Kinesthetic Learners**

Kinesthetic or tactile learners are often able to maximize their study sessions through these techniques:

- Practicing a technique
- Demonstrating a principle
- Creating a model
- Engaging in a hands-on activity
- Studying in a position that is comfortable, even if it is not a traditional desk/table or chair setup.
- Taking a field trip
- Working on drills or memory exercises while walking or exercising
- Miming or acting out key points for memory reinforcement
- Rather than placing your book on a table when reading, try holding it in your hands instead
- When giving an explanation of something, try standing up.
- Jot down notes while you are reading
- Use beats or rhythm to explain information or memorize information

- Sit near the front of the classroom in order to avoid becoming distracted during lectures
- Make models that demonstrate the primary concept of the material you are studying in order to reinforce the material
- Record class lectures and then listen to them while you are working out or walking

Best test type for kinesthetic learners-fill in the blank and multiple choice

Worst test type for kinesthetic learners-long essay tests.

## **Top 10 Memory Improvement Tips**

Before sitting down to study for your next test, you might want to follow a few of the strategies below in order to boost your ability to recall your test material. There are many techniques that have been proven to be quite effective for improving one's memory. These techniques offer great ways to enhance your recall, improve your memory and increase your ability to retain information.

### **1.Focus your attention on your study materials**

It is important to understand that one of the primary components of memory is your attention. In order for information to make the transition from your short-term memory into your long-term memory, you must be able to actively attend to it. Begin by selecting a study location that is free from distractions, such as music, television, other people, etc.

### **2.Avoid the temptation to cram by developing regular study session times.**

Many people fall into the trap of not studying regularly enough and then trying to cram all of their studying into a short period of time just prior to a test. In order to retain information properly you must study materials over a period of several sessions. This gives you the best opportunity for processing information adequately. Students who maintain regular study sessions are usually able to remember information much better than those students who attempt to cram it all into one long session.

### 3. Organize and structure the materials you will be studying

It has been discovered that information that structured in the memory in clusters that are related to one another. You can benefit from this by organizing the materials you will be studying before you actually study them. Try to group concepts that are similar to one another as well as terms together. Another effective method is to make an outline using your textbook and notes in order group concepts that are related to one another.

### 4. Use mnemonic devices to better recall information

Mnemonic devices are special techniques that can help you in recalling information. Basically, it is just a way to remember certain pieces of information. For example, you might associate a particular term that you need to remember with something that you are already familiar with. Mnemonic devices commonly use humor, novelty and imagery. You might use a song, rhyme or even a joke to help you remember a specific piece of information.

### 5. Rehearse information that you need to study

You must make the effort to encode information that you need to learn into your long-term memory. An effective encoding technique is elaborative rehearsal. For instance, you might read the definition of an important term and then study the definition of that term. Next, you might read a description that is more detailed regarding the meaning of that term. By repeating this same process several times, you will be able to recall the information far easier.

#### 6. Relating new information to something you are already familiar with

When you must study information that is not familiar to you, try relating it to something that you already know. Establishing a relationship between memories that are already in existence and new ideas, you can significantly improve the chance of recalling information that you have recently learned.

#### 7. Visualize concepts to improve your recall abilities

Many students find they are able to maximize their study times by visualizing the information they need to learn. For example, you might pay special attention to charts, graphs, photographs and other graphics that accompany the material. When visual aids or clues are not available you might even create your own, such as drawing figures or charts in your notes. Using different colored pens and highlighters can also be an effective way to group ideas that are related.

#### 8. Teaching new ideas to someone else

Research indicates that reading materials aloud can dramatically improve your recall of the material. In a like manner, actually teaching the material to someone else can also improve recall ability. Try this technique out by studying with a friend or with a study partner. This is a great method that allows both of you to benefit and improve your recall abilities.

#### 9. Give extra attention to information that is difficult

It happens to all of us at some point; we run across information that we simply find to be difficult. Spend additional time with this information or even try restructuring it in order to remember it more easily.

#### 10. Change up your study routine

While maintaining regular study sessions is important, you may also find it helpful to vary your study routine as well. For example, if you typically study in a certain location, move to a different location to study. Or, if you usually study in the afternoons, try studying in the morning or in the evenings instead. Adding a new element to your study sessions can often improve the effectiveness of your study techniques and improve your overall long-term recall.

## **Conclusion**

Informing yourself about the different styles of learning and the most effective memory techniques can help you to become more in tune with the most efficient and effective methods for you to personally learn. Through this insight you can learn which study techniques work best for you and which methods are least

effective. By maximizing the most effective study techniques you will be able to get more out of the classroom as well as through your study sessions for improved educational success!