

Understanding the Learning Styles

— A Practical Guide to the 8 Ways People Learn Best —



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UNDERSTANDING THE LEARNING STYLES

Introduction

In recent years, much has been done to research the different learning styles. It's no longer considered prudent to deliver information in one way and expect everyone to come to the same understanding.

The reality is that there are many different ways to learn. No one type of learner is intrinsically smarter than the other. There's just a difference in the way people understand and grasp information.

Remember your teachers who used to stand at the front of the classroom and lecture all day? Eventually they would draw or write something on the board, but essentially, they were just talking *at* you.

That's part of the "*old school*" way. It was a simple equation of teacher + children = school.

Thankfully times have changed. Nowadays, scientists and teachers have acquired an understanding of the many intricate ways the human brain learns.

In this report, you'll learn about eight different types of learners, how to identify your learning style, and strategies to maximize the way you learn.

1. Auditory or Musical Learners

The typical strategy to study for a test always involved reading textbooks and reviewing handwritten notes. Sure, the teacher would lecture, but books were necessary to review missed information.

Did you have a difficult time reading textbooks? Did you find yourself reading the same sentence over and over again, trying to understand and remember the important points?

It's not that you couldn't physically read. Instead, the *problem might have been that books bored you because you're not a visual learner.*

Have you ever tried listening to an audio book or MP3 audio? Did that keep your attention? Do you always need to have music playing? If so, you might be an auditory learner, or one who learns best by listening.

Here are some characteristics of an Auditory Learner:

- * They remember what they hear.
- * They often talk while they write.

- * They remember names but forget faces.
- * They're easily distracted by noise.
- * They prefer to read things out loud to remember them.

Just as when babies learn their native language by listening to the people around them, auditory learners learn in very much the same way. They need to focus their attention on the teacher while she speaks and they'll be distracted and forgetful if others are also speaking.

The auditory learner needs to fully understand what the teacher is saying in order for the written notes to be worth studying.

Ways to teach an Auditory Learner:

1. Explain project directions rather than show them. They remember spoken words more than visual examples.
2. Keep music playing in the background. They enjoy sound and will often find a completely quiet room distracting or disturbing.
3. Use educational audio books or podcasts, since they learn through hearing.
4. Make jingles or songs for remembering important facts.

2. Visual or Spatial Learners

Visual learners are great at memorizing passages as they retain everything in images. They usually learn best in flexible environments where they have the time and ability to sketch out

the full topic. These individuals learn well from multimedia presentations.

Fortunately, visual learners usually have good (even photographic) memories and, at times, can solve problems by simply closing their eyes and remembering examples and scenarios from the past.

Characteristics of a Visual Learner:

- * Takes excessive and detailed notes to review
- * Has enhanced reading comprehension
- * Remembers faces, but forgets people's names
- * Likely draws diagrams to explain complicated thoughts
- * Might color code important data so they can quickly pick out the needed information

This is perhaps the easiest of the learning styles to accommodate in an educational setting because of the frequent use of textbooks and notes. However, learning by sight can be difficult when there are more vibrant distractions at hand or when the focus of the topic is unclear or non-visual (such as the spoken word).

Ways to Teach a Visual Learner:

1. Use flash cards for facts or memory-based learning.
2. Write key points multiple times.
3. Use charts, maps, graphs, videos, or computers as learning tools.
4. Use bright colors to emphasize important points.

In an educational setting, it's best for visual learners to sit in the front row to prevent distractions from taking them away from the job at hand. They might also have some difficulty if asked to perform a task they haven't read about or seen before.

A lack of visual stimulation (such as photos and graphics), can be a distraction to the visual learner.

3. Linguistic Learners

Linguistic learners are very fortunate in that they can learn by both hearing and reading information. *They usually have the ability to learn new languages* quickly and easily.

Complicated words and sentences are also easily interpreted along with illegible handwriting, although linguistic learners usually have clear handwriting themselves.

Linguistic learners are able to express themselves clearly in both writing and speech, and *they have a love of words*. These people often find new ways to express themselves, such as in poetry or other creative writing projects.

Generally, linguistic learners search out careers such as journalism, law, teaching or politics.

Characteristics of a Linguistic Learner

- * Prefers word-based math problems over solving equations
- * Excels at learning other languages
- * Enjoys word games

- * Good reasoning skills
- * Excellent public speaker or debater

Since linguistic learners thrive by reading information, technological advances with computers and internet access have made teaching linguistic learners much easier. By simply using the computer, these individuals have immediate access to countless topics and are capable of learning on their own or in a structured environment.

Ways to Teach a Linguistic Learner:

1. Have debates about current events.
2. Create a family, school or work newsletter.
3. Write stories and tell them to other people.
4. Interview friends or family members and journal about their interviews.
5. Play vocabulary games and learn new words everyday.

4. Mathematical or Logical Learners

Logical learners excel in academic areas such as math and science and have the upper hand at solving puzzles and day to day issues. Thinking logically is a great advantage in any circumstance, and these individuals can follow difficult concepts easily, as long as the base concept is described clearly.

This style of learning involves inductive and deductive reasoning. Using numbers and other pieces of abstract information, logical learners are able to see connections between different pieces of information and are also quick to notice patterns.

Characteristics of a Logical Learner:

- * Great problem solver
- * Likes to create systems and procedures for future use
- * Asks plenty of questions
- * Orderly and likes to create to-do lists and prioritize each item on the list
- * Likes strategizing and games such as chess or brainteasers

Ways to Teach a Logical Learner:

1. Use abstract patterns or relationships.
2. List a sequence of steps for completing projects.
3. Allow them to analyze and break down the steps of a project sequentially.
4. Give additional resources so they can investigate the topic in-depth.
5. Allow them to test out their theories.

5. Social or Interpersonal Learners

Social learners work very well in group situations and bring great benefits when sharing ideas. *These learners excel in personal and dramatic areas*, but can excel at anything if they have the chance to learn the concept through interactive means.

Unfortunately, this means that they tend to have issues with long or tedious work unless it's interspersed with progressive discussions or activities along the way.

These learners often choose careers which require a lot of social interaction, such as teaching, politics, ministry, law, or social work.

Characteristics of a Social Learner:

- * Enjoys working with partners or small groups
- * Great demonstrators who value feedback from teachers or project partners
- * Enjoys frequent interaction either with classroom or family projects
- * Good at reading people and getting to the heart of communication problems
- * Enjoys team sports and games with lots of people

These social learners thrive on interaction with other colleagues, yet struggle to work independently. Since they enjoy organizing groups, they might be perceived as pushy or bossy, but they're also good communicators, which can help in getting projects completed on time.

Teaching a Social Learner:

1. Implement group projects and allow these learners to be in charge.
2. Allow discussion of ideas and theories to enhance this individual's learning.

6. Solitary or Intrapersonal Learners

Solitary learners can learn well if they have the time and place to take a concept and study it on their own. *Given the time, a solitary learner will completely immerse themselves in a subject until the idea is clear in their mind.*

Usually these learners will benefit from a quiet space in a familiar place where they can comfortably work at their own pace.

Characteristics of a Solitary Learner:

- * Self-motivated; prefers working independently
- * They take the time to understand what has to be done
- * Good at evaluating their own work
- * Prefers to express themselves rather than memorize facts and figures
- * They have a firm understanding of what they like and don't like

Solitary learners are generally independent, which is a good trait to have; however, in the adult world a certain amount of

interaction is expected, both at work and home. This can sometimes cause a solitary person some stress.

Teaching a Solitary Learner:

1. Assign a project with specific goals or deadlines.
2. Give choices about how to work, either independently or as a group.
3. Role play so the person can feel comfortable interacting in groups.
4. Encourage writing in a private journal.
5. Allow the individual to express themselves.

Solitary learners often choose careers such as psychiatrists, counselors, social workers, philosophers or ministers because of their limited interaction with others.

7. Bodily or Kinesthetic Learners

Individuals who are kinesthetic learners understand concepts best by doing. When they are able to touch materials, rather than just read about them, their comprehension and memory increase dramatically.

These people don't want to sit at their desks listening to a lecture; *they want to be moving and physically learning.*

Very often these types of learners are also great athletes because they're in tune with how their body moves and functions. *They like the physical action necessary to excel in sports* and will continue to excel to the top most level.

Characteristics of a Bodily Learner:

- * Excellent motor skills
- * Comfortable with trying new movements and repeating them
- * Finely attuned senses and athletic ability
- * Very in tune with how their body works and moves
- * Enjoys creating things with their hands

Some common career choices for a bodily learner are sports coach, personal trainer, athlete, dancer, artist, firefighter, police officer, or military.

Teaching a Bodily Learner:

1. Assign projects that allow the building of models or construction.
2. Have them observe the physical changes to their body while doing an activity.
3. Computer simulation games can be good learning tools.
4. Allow people to safely handle project materials rather than just reading about them.
5. Allow young children to practice writing their letters in sand or shaving cream.

Interestingly, many kinesthetic learners are mistakenly diagnosed as having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). This is because kinesthetic learners learn best when moving around or using their body and muscles.

Unfortunately, some teachers are taking it upon themselves to diagnose this behavior as ADHD rather than investigating the type of learning style that might best suit these learners. If you encounter this issue, see if learning kinesthetically can improve the situation.

8. Naturalist Learners

Naturalist learners are those who are most comfortable outside. They enjoy camping, hiking, skiing, and anything that has to do with the outdoors.

They also enjoy plants and animals, so in the warm weather they're the ones making their lawns look beautiful. They might also be the ones in your neighborhood who take in stray animals out of the goodness of their heart.

Characteristics of a Naturalist Learner:

- * Enjoys looking at shapes, patterns and animals from nature
- * Learns best in an outdoor setting
- * Enjoys taking care of animals
- * Skilled at maintaining plants

These naturalist learners also have a passion for learning about space, planets, and natural energy forces. Topics include weather, physics, and even cooking. *They want to know why certain things happen and look for cause and effect scenarios*, such as how a thunderstorm occurs when a cold front mixes with a warm front.

Teaching a Naturalist Learner:

1. Allow hands-on learning with plants and animals.
2. Encourage reading books with survival or nature themes.
3. Offer outdoor life magazines or those that feature natural topics.
4. Embrace nature – hiking, zoo, aquarium, farm, etc.
5. Introduce gardening as a hobby.

With *a strong love of the outdoors and all things natural*, these people may choose careers such as: landscape architect, veterinarian, biologist, forest ranger, or florist.

Conclusion

Whatever your learning style, it's to your benefit to focus on and embrace the approach to learning that fits you the best. The more you recognize your strengths in a particular learning style, the more quickly you'll learn and retain information.

Have you encountered challenges with your education in the past? The good news is you can find success in acquiring new knowledge as long as you focus on methods that match your abilities and learning preferences.