

Overview of Learning Styles

by Marcia Neill

Many people recognize that each person prefers different learning styles and techniques. Learning styles group common ways that people learn. Everyone has a mix of learning styles. Some people may find that they have a dominant style of learning, with far less use of the other styles. Others may find that they use different styles in different circumstances. There is no right mix. Nor are your styles fixed. You can develop ability in less dominant styles, as well as further develop styles that you already use well.

Using multiple learning styles and “multiple intelligences” for learning is a relatively new approach. This approach is one that educators have only recently started to recognize. Traditional schooling used (and continues to use) mainly linguistic and logical teaching methods. It also uses a limited range of learning and teaching techniques. Many schools still rely on classroom and book-based teaching, much repetition, and pressured exams for reinforcement and review. A result is that we often label those who use these learning styles and techniques as “bright.” Those who use less favored learning styles often find themselves in lower classes, with various not-so-complimentary labels and sometimes lower quality teaching. This can create positive and negative spirals that reinforce the belief that one is “smart” or “dumb.” By recognizing and understanding your own learning styles, you can use techniques better suited to you. This improves the speed and quality of your learning.



The learning styles are:

- Visual.** Child works best when able to see, watch, read and view, preferring to use pictures, images, and spatial understanding.
- Aural.** You prefer using sound and music.
- Verbal.** Child works best when able to hear, speak, discuss and think out loud, preferring to use words, both in speech and writing.
- Physical.** Child works best when able to move and do things with large muscles, preferring to use his/her's body, hands and sense of touch.
- Logical.** Child works best when able to feel using small motor muscles and through personal relationships, preferring to use logic, and reasoning.
- Social.** You prefer to learn in groups with other people.
- Solitary.** You prefer to work alone and use self-study.

Why Learning Styles? Understanding the basis of learning your preferred styles guides the way you learn.

Your learning styles have more influence than you may realize. Your preferred styles guide the way you learn. They also change the way you internally represent experiences, the way you recall information, and even the words you choose.

Research shows us that each learning style uses different parts of the brain. By involving more of the brain during learning, we remember more of what we learn. Researchers using brain-imaging technologies have

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been able to find out the key areas of the brain responsible for each learning style. For example:

- Visual.** The occipital lobes at the back of the brain manage the visual sense. Both the occipital and parietal lobes manage spatial orientation.
- Aural.** The temporal lobes handle aural content. The right temporal lobe is especially important for music.
- Verbal.** The temporal and frontal lobes, especially two specialized areas called Broca's and Wernicke's areas (in the left hemisphere of these two lobes).
- Physical.** The cerebellum and the motor cortex (at the back of the frontal lobe) handle much of our physical movement.
- Logical.** The parietal lobes, especially the left side, drive our logical thinking.
- Social.** The frontal and temporal lobes handle much of our social activities. The limbic system (not shown apart from the hippocampus) also influences both the social and solitary styles. The limbic system has a lot to do with emotions, moods and aggression.
- Solitary.** The frontal and parietal lobes, and the limbic system, are also active with this style.

Test what kind of learner you have. Use a list of numbers:

- Say** them in order and ask your child to repeat the numbers.
- Show** you child a series of pictures or numbers and ask them to repeat what they saw.
- Have your child write** a series of numbers and then cover them up and ask your child to repeat the numbers.

Whichever way has the greatest degree of accuracy, is an indication of your child's favored learning style.

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