
LEARNING STYLES

The way a person prefers to learn is called his/her learning style. There is no right or wrong, good or bad learning style—it has nothing to do with intelligence or skill. It has everything to do with the way a person's brain works to learn and store information efficiently. Since everyone learns differently, understanding learning styles can help you become a better learner. The three most common learning styles are Visual, Auditory, and Tactile.

Remember: knowing how your brain prefers to learn will improve every aspect from creating a schedule to taking notes to studying for a test.

Learning Style Test

Write down your answers on a piece of paper. Don't spend too much time thinking about each question; instead write down your first reaction.

1. When you study for a test, would you rather

- a) read notes, read headings in a book, and look at diagrams and illustrations
- b) have someone ask you questions, or repeat facts silently to yourself
- c) write things out on index cards and make models or diagrams

2. Which of these do you do when you listen to music?

- a) daydream (see things that go with the music)
- b) hum along
- c) move with the music, tap your foot, etc.

3. When you work at solving a problem do you

- a) make a list, organize the steps, and check them off as they are done
- b) make a few phone calls and talk to friends or experts
- c) make a model of the problem or walk through all the steps in your mind

4. When you read for fun, do you prefer

- a) a travel book with a lot of pictures in it
- b) a mystery book with a lot of conversation in it
- c) a book where you can answer questions and solve problems

5. To learn how a computer works, would you rather

- a) watch a movie about it
- b) listen to someone explain it
- c) take the computer apart and try to figure it out for yourself

6. You have just entered a science museum, what will you do first?

- a) look around and find a map showing the locations of the various exhibits
- b) talk to a museum guide and ask about exhibits
- c) go into the first exhibit that looks interesting, and read directions later

7. What kind of restaurant would you rather *not* go to?

- a) one with the lights too bright
- b) one with the music too loud
- c) one with uncomfortable chairs

8. Would you rather go to

- a) an art class
- b) a music class
- c) an exercise class

9. Which are you most likely to do when you are happy?

- a) grin
- b) shout with joy
- c) jump for joy

10. If you were at a party, what would you be most likely to remember the next day?

- a) the faces of the people there, but not the names
- b) the names but not the faces
- c) the things you did and said while you were there

11. When you see the word “d-o-g”, what do you do first?

- a) think of a picture of a particular dog
- b) say the word “dog” to yourself silently
- c) sense the feeling of being with a dog (petting it, running with it, etc.)

12. When you tell a story, would you rather

- a) write it down
- b) tell it out loud
- c) act it out

13. What is most distracting for you when you are trying to concentrate?

- a) visual distractions
- b) noises
- c) other sensations like hunger, tight shoes, or worry

14. What are you most likely to do when you are angry?

- a) scowl
- b) shout or “blow up”
- c) stomp off and slam doors

15. When you aren't sure how to spell a word, which of these are you most likely to do?

- a) write it out to see if it looks right
- b) sound it out
- c) write it out to see if it feels right

16. Which are you most likely to do when standing in a long line?

- a) look at poster advertising other movies
- b) talk to the person next to you
- c) tap your foot or move around in some other way

The Results

If you scored mostly A's, you may be a *Visual* learner. You learn by seeing and looking.

Visual Learners...

- ...take numerous and detailed notes.
- ...tend to sit in the front of class.
- ...are usually neat and clean.
- ...often close their eyes to visualize or remember something.
- ...find something to watch if they are bored.
- ...like to see what they are learning.
- ...benefit from illustrations and presentations that use color.
- ...are attracted to written or spoken language rich in imagery.
- ...prefer stimuli to be isolated from auditory and tactile distraction.
- ...find passive surroundings ideal.

<i>Visual Learning Tips</i>
Take lecture notes. Underline, highlight, or circle printed material. Borrow others' notes to compare to your own. Draw pictures in notes to illustrate concepts. Use a variety of colors—pens, pencils, markers, highlighters, paper, etc. for different categories or concepts. Write it out. Use outlines, pictures, graphs, charts, and diagrams. Draw out ideas. Take visual materials from class with you so you can look at them later.

If you scored mostly B's, you may be an *Auditory* learner. You learn by hearing and listening.

Auditory Learners...

...sit where they can hear but needn't pay attention to what is happening in front.

...may not coordinate colors or clothes, but can explain what they are wearing and why.

...hum or talk to themselves or others when bored.

...acquire knowledge by reading aloud.

...appreciate spoken expression as opposed to written.

...remember by verbalizing lessons to themselves (if they don't verbalize, they have difficulty reading maps or diagrams or handling conceptual assignments like mathematics).

<i>Auditory Learning Tips</i>
Study in groups and talk things out. Work out problems aloud. Record lectures, tutoring, and study group sessions (makes a permanent verbal record of material). Read texts aloud (or into a recorder). Listen to lecture/text tapes while driving, walking, working out, etc. Use word association.

If you had mostly C's, you may have a *Tactile* learning style. You learn by touching and doing.

Tactile Learners...

- need to be active and take frequent breaks
- speak with their hands and with gestures
- remember what was done, but have difficulty recalling what was said or seen
- find reasons to tinker or move when bored
- rely on what they can directly experience or perform
- perceive by activities such as cooking, construction, engineering, and art
- enjoy field trips and tasks that involve manipulating materials
- sit near the door or someplace where they can easily get up and move around
- are uncomfortable in classrooms where they lack opportunities for hands-on experience
- communicate by touching and appreciate physically expressed encouragement such as a pat on the back

<i>Tactile Learning Tips</i>
Trace letters of words with finger (to memorize spelling). Use finger as a guide while reading. Type out or rewrite class notes. Get hands on learning—in science or computer labs, for example—don't just watch someone else do it. Use models (like the human brain, DNA, etc.) that you can touch and see. Write everything out. Draw charts or diagrams of relationships.