



Understanding learning styles can help you to choose effective strategies that suit your preferred learning style.

What are learning styles?

It is generally recognised that individuals prefer to learn in different ways and develop different learning behaviours and patterns. From an early age, we begin to develop individual methods and strategies by which we learn best.

The ways in which we perceive, process, and internalise information are often referred to as learning styles or preferences. There are a number of models that try to differentiate between the ways people learn. It is important to remember that no particular learning style is better than any other. Each is simply different, but might be better suited to specific learning situations. The purpose of looking at learning style preferences is to help you realise that:

- there are different ways to learn;
- all ways of learning are acceptable;
- a better understanding of ourselves as learners puts us more in control of our learning;
- a greater self-understanding leads to greater interest and effectiveness in study routines; and
- developing the ability to learn in unfamiliar ways can result in better outcomes.

We each have a different set of preferences for how, when, where and how often to learn. Learning style preferences indicate a generalised approach to learning and are also influenced by habits, attitudes, personality and experiences of adult learners.

How will knowledge of my learning style and preferences help me learn better?

There are many approaches to learning and it should be accepted that, as efficient learners, we do not always use the same learning style all the time for all learning situations. By answering a learning style questionnaire on one of the websites given below, you should end up with a clearer picture of yourself as a learner. This awareness may significantly increase the effectiveness of your learning.

While you may not be able to control the way you receive information at university (i.e. textbook, classroom, lecturer, web-based content, group work, etc.), you can control the way you process that information while you are learning. You can do this by tailoring your learning activities to your learning style.

Different learning styles

- Visual/pictorial** – learn by seeing visual displays of information (e.g. diagrams, posters, visualising events, etc.).
- Auditory** – learn by hearing (e.g. listening to lectures, reading aloud).
- Read/write** – learn by writing notes, diagrams etc. of information from readings.
- Kinaesthetic** – learn by touching/using a hands-on approach.

What specific strategies should I use to learn more effectively?

Visual/pictorial:

- draw concept maps, flow charts, diagrams or pictures as you read;
- visualise the assignment and the relationship between all its parts; make notes of what you see; draw a flow chart;
- draw comics or cartoons based on key concepts;
- use colour (highlighters or pens) to colour code different key concepts or ideas;
- make mind maps to explore the connections between the ideas;
- make posters of key information and put them up where you will see them often, use coloured backgrounds and text;
- make flashcards, perhaps including pictures;
- take photos;
- sit near a window, or somewhere with a pleasant view.

Auditory:

- read text aloud;
- read the assignment aloud to yourself or someone else;
- play word association games using flashcards;
- discuss the topic with a friend;
- read some information, cover it, and then repeat it aloud to yourself;
- make up silly or funny songs or rhymes about the content;
- speak aloud role plays of particular scenarios or content, repeat;
- listen to recorded lectures on Interact2;
- record notes to replay later while you are running, working or preparing to sleep;
- listen to quiet music while you study.

Read/write:

- keep a study diary and write down what you remember after you have read a text;
- annotate readings;
- make notes and underline them;
- underline key points;
- write and re-write keywords or phrases;
- read other information – do some research and read widely;
- make written posters on key concepts;
- use flashcards;
- surround yourself with words while you study – put key ideas on post-it notes and attach them to the walls.

Kinaesthetic:

- incorporate movement into your study by taking a walk or riding an exercise bike while reading notes aloud;
- scribble all your ideas down, then choose the best one; use a large sheet of paper to make plans;

- build models or posters of key ideas;
- discuss a topic with a friend while going for a walk or throwing a ball;
- remember experiences from classes and lectures: repeat your actions and tell yourself why you are doing each of those things;
- choose a physically active learning environment; plan active breaks – dance, run, walk and stretch;
- have as much of your body as possible touching a surface while you study – lie on the floor, put your arms on your desk, lean against the back of your chair, wall or a textured pillow;
- play with a stress ball while you study;
- sit wherever you are comfortable to study – outside, against a tree or on a bed;
- listen to music while studying, tap your foot or pen to the rhythm.

Further information about my learning styles and preferences

- VARK learning styles and questionnaire: <https://vark-learn.com/the-vark-questionnaire/>
- Honey and Mumford's four main learning style preferences: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-92dlFiN_p8
- Multiple intelligence website: <http://www.ldpride.net/learningstyles.MI.htm>
- VAK learning styles: <http://www.businessballs.com/vaklearningstylestest.htm>
- Myers Briggs Type Indicator, a widely used personality model: <http://www.keirsey.com>

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