

Learning Styles

What Styles?

The Auditory Learner

Advantages

An auditory learner likes listening. If you are an auditory learner you benefit from talks and lectures. You should also be able to absorb a lot of information from radio programmers. You are very likely to have skills in sequencing and organizing information and have a methodical approach to many aspects of life. You may remember information by using a checklist. You can often be considered a reliable and independent worker

Disadvantages

It's highly likely that you are unable to multitask, having to complete one job before embarking on another. There is also a possibility that you focus on small bits of information and do not obtain a holistic and broad picture of something you are working on. You may also prefer to work on your own rather than work in groups.

The Visual Learner

Advantages

A visual learner enjoys images. As a visual learner, you will be good at visualizing events and imagining situations. You can use visual strategies for remembering information. You probably get considerable pleasure from learning involving visual and creative skills. You may also see the whole picture when discussing or working on a problem or task.

Disadvantages

You may need more time to complete tasks. You can be more interested in the appearance of something than its actual value - which may be a disadvantage in some situations, though not in all. You may not spend enough time on, or give enough attention to specific details.

The Kinaesthetic Learner

Advantages

The kinesthetic learner enjoys learning through doing. This active learning style is useful for assembling and making products. You may find it easy to demonstrate how to do something. You are likely to be able to enjoy the actual experience of learning.

Disadvantages

You may miss some instructions or information if it is presented orally. You may find it difficult to concentrate on a lengthy written task while seated. You might find it hard to pay attention to detail - especially if it is in written form.

Social/Emotional Learners

Advantages

The social/emotional learner tends to enjoy working with others or in a team. You tend to encourage others to be involved in a task and therefore you could be seen as quite motivational. You probably enjoy working in groups and will have a prime concern for the wellbeing of colleagues and friends. You thrive on discussion and this can be very stimulating for you.

Disadvantages

You may become too dependent on assistance from others. You may find it difficult to structure a task if you are completely on your own. It is possible that you are greatly influenced by your feelings and this might affect your judgment.

The Metacognitive Learner

Advantages

The metacognitive learner wants to gain an overview. You tend to be good at reflecting and problem solving. You should be able to use previous learning effectively, when learning new information. You may need time to consider all possibilities and this can be appreciated by others; they may seek out and trust your advice.

Disadvantages

Your style of learning may be frustrating to others if you are working in a group. You may take a long time to carry out a task, and could appear to be pedantic because of this.

Learning for Life

Learning styles are important not only for learning, but for helping us through our everyday lives. Learning styles relate to a person's preferences for absorbing information, for solving problems and for success in social and personal situations. They can have implications for learning, family life, marriage, leisure and work.

It is important that people are aware of their learning styles so they can relate them to personality type and life preferences, leading to greater self-knowledge; knowing more about yourself helps you gain maximum success and benefit from both leisure and work.

Dimensions of Learning Style

There are many different dimensions of learning style - including environmental preferences such as time of day, the place where the learning activity is taking place, the background sound and type of lighting. Matching your learning style with the best learning environment can make a big difference to the outcome.

The way information is presented is another aspect to be considered, for example, a visual learner having to read lengthy manuals at work, without any visual support, may struggle. If, however, sketches and diagrams are used to compliment the text, the visual learner becomes a more effective learner.

In the learning styles questionnaire used in 'Take the Test' we have focused on five dimensions - each refers to a different learning style as follows:

- 1) listening/reading - auditory learners
- 2) seeing/visualizing - visual learners
- 3) experiencing/hands on - kinesthetic learners
- 4) feeling/belonging - social/emotional learners
- 5) reflecting/evaluating - metacognitive learners

There is no hierarchy of style, no style is better than another, as learning style is very individual. What can determine success, or otherwise, is the matching of style to the task. People who have difficulty in work and in learning may do so because of the mismatch between their work tasks and their own specific style. Change the way a task is presented and the difficulties can disappear.

The Role of the Task

When you set out to tackle a task, the best results may be achieved by matching what has to be done with your actual preference for learning. What we have to do in our lives and our jobs is important, but it's often best to tailor the task to the learner, rather than the other way around. Tasks can usually be changed to accommodate the learner's preference. This can be done by first assessing an individual's preferred learning style and then working out the skills required to complete the task, as well as identifying the learning resources that are available.

The Role of the Environment

The learning environment will affect an individual's learning experience. Some of us are more sensitive to certain environmental factors than others. These factors can include lighting - some prefer bright lights, while others prefer dim lights; color, the use of music and seating arrangements. Some learners prefer to listen to music while working, others like totally quiet surroundings. Some prefer to sit on a sofa while reading or writing, while others may be more comfortable sitting at a desk. Everyone should try to recognize his/her own environmental preferences and as far as possible incorporate them into the learning or work activity.

My Plan

My dominant learning style is _____.

My secondary learning style is _____.

My intellectual strengths are _____

Techniques that fit my style I'm willing to try are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

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