

Learning Styles

Not everyone learns in the same way. Most learners have a preferred learning style. A person's learning style is simply the way in which he or she learns best. No one way of learning is necessarily better than another—it is simply different.

Your learning style involves how you use your senses. While most people use all of their senses as they learn, most of us seem to learn best through one particular sense. Most educators and learning theorists agree that there are three primary perceptual preferences, or learning styles, for most learners.

Auditory Learners

Auditory Learners learn best by hearing or listening. They prefer talking about a situation; express emotions verbally; enjoy listening, but cannot wait to talk; like hearing self and others talk; learn best through verbal instruction; move lips or subvocalize when reading; remember auditory repetition; study well with a friend to discuss material.

Visual Learners

Visual Learners learn best by seeing. They prefer watching demonstrations; have intense concentration and ability to visually imagine information; remember faces but forget names; write down things and take detailed notes; doodle; find things to watch; look around and study their environment; facial expression is a good indication of emotions; quiet—do not talk at length; become impatient when extensive listening is involved; learn best by studying alone.

Tactile (Haptic) Learners

Tactile Learners learn best by doing. They need direct involvement; fidget when reading and are not avid readers; remember best what is done, not what is seen or heard; images are accompanied by movement; easily distracted when not able to move; find reasons to move; express emotions physically by jumping and gesturing; do not listen well; try things out by touching, feeling and manipulating; need frequent breaks when studying.

Different situations and types of information are learned best in different ways, but it is important to be aware of your preferred learning style to make optimal use of learning time.

Auditory Learners

If you are an auditory learner, the following study tips may be helpful:

- Tape record classroom lectures and class notes. Summarizing is especially helpful.
- When preparing for a test, tape record review sheets and important notes and listen to the tape 2 and 3 times.
- Write vocabulary words on index cards with definitions on the back. Review them by reading words aloud, repeating the definition and then checking to see if you are correct.
- Verbalize things you want to remember such as dates, key terms, quotes and important events.
- Ask your teacher if you can turn in a tape or give an oral report instead of a written report.
- Use a highlighter for main ideas and important facts in your textbook or notes.
- Read aloud whenever possible.
- Study with a friend so you can discuss and hear the information. If you can verbalize the information, you increase the probability of understanding it. Have your friend ask you questions and vice versa. Verbally review facts and terms which must be memorized.
- Preview a chapter before reading it by looking at the titles, introduction, subtopics, key terms and conclusion/summary. This increases your ability to maintain your focus while reading the chapter because you have familiarity with the information.

Visual Learners

If you are a visual learner, the following study tips may be helpful:

- Write things down. Take notes in class to help you remember things better and for use in studying for tests. Compare your notes with those of a friend who is a good note-taker.
- Write science and social studies vocabulary words on an index card with the definitions on the back.
- Ask your teacher to repeat something when you don't understand it.
- Use a highlighter for main ideas and important facts in your textbook or notes.
- Preview a chapter before reading it by looking at the titles, introduction, subtopics, key terms and conclusion/summary.
- Pay attention to graphs, pictures and charts.
- Learning from a lecture is not easy for visual learners. When listening to a lecture, always look at the speaker to help you maintain your attention. Summarize important concepts but don't try to write verbatim what they are saying.
- Sit close to the front of the room and away from distractions such as your close friends, doors or windows.
- It is better to study alone rather than with a friend.
- Study in a quiet place with no interruptions. If you need to have music, make it soft background music that will not be distracting.
- Practice visualizing or picturing important information. Use flashcards to help you isolate and mentally "see" facts and their chronological or sequential order.

Tactile Learners

If you are a tactile learner, the following study tips may be helpful:

- While in class, experiment with ways of moving without disturbing the class; for example, cross your legs and bounce your foot that is off the floor, roll a pencil between your fingers, squeeze a large rubber eraser or doodle on a piece of paper.
- Write vocabulary words or terms on an index card and walk around while reviewing or reciting them.
- Take frequent notes and write important facts several times while studying.
- Try to act out words or events with simple gestures which will aid your recall such as smiling at the word “amiable” or making tight fist for the word “penurious” or “miserly.”
- Whenever possible, use graphic note-taking methods such as mapping, concept trees or time lines.
- Use a highlighter for main ideas and important facts in your textbook or notes.
- Try studying in different positions; for example, lying on your back or stomach, and change positions frequently.
- Take frequent, short breaks and do something that involves light activity such as getting a drink of water.
- Try writing key terms in the air or with your finger on a smooth surface or in the carpet.
- Study with background music that isn’t too distracting.
- Whenever possible, experiment and “do” your assignments, experiments and projects in an active way. For example, make drawings of key events.