

## Learning Styles

By Suzanne C. Miller

**"The process of learning requires not only hearing and applying, but also forgetting and then remembering again"- John Gray**

Research suggests that faculty who are sensitive to their students learning styles reach students more quickly and more easily than those who force all students to adapt to the traditional read/lecture only approach (keep in mind our discussion of memory). Use of learning styles is key to enhanced memory. It is also important to keep in mind that each student's memory retrieval strategies are linked to the way their brain functions (brain-based learning). This is not to say that we should not encourage students to explore all learning styles and enhance all of their learning skills. Instead it suggests that student will learn more quickly and with less emotional resistance if we consider the learning style that is most natural for them. The more we can enhance learner success, the more likely we are to retain students and to inspire them to continue their education.

<http://www.4faculty.org/includes/digdeeper/lesson4/learningstyles.htm>

### STEP 1

Take one or more of the following online Learning Styles tests to determine which learning style(s) are your strong suits.

<http://www.vark-learn.com/english/page.asp?p=questionnaire>

<http://www.metamath.com/lswb/dvclearn.htm>

### STEP 2

Read the corresponding summary of study techniques that will help you get the most out of your efforts. Focus on choosing curriculum or materials that meet these needs. For example, if you are a Visual/non-verbal, select a textbook that is multi-color with photos, pictures and charts included in the text (eye appealing). If you are a Visual/Verbal, your text can be more black and white since you learn easily with words. Try adding in one new technique every week or two until you are processing and retaining at lightning speed.

**Visual Nonverbal Learning Style** (Pictures and symbols in place of words)

You learn best when information is **presented visually and in a picture or design format**. In a classroom setting, you benefit from instructors who use **visual aids** such as film, video, maps and charts. You benefit from information obtained from the **pictures and diagrams** in textbooks. Online you need **images and color cues** to help remember information and to retain your full attention. Repetitive use of the same icons can be very helpful. You tend to like to work in a quiet room and may not like to work in study groups. When trying to remember something, you can often visualize a picture of it in your mind. You may have an artistic side that enjoys activities having to do with visual art and design.

The more visual aids provided, the more likely visual/nonverbal learners are to enjoy the course and succeed. Visual/nonverbal learners often become impatient with long instructions not enhanced by visual cues. So, as much as possible, translate the instructor's words and ideas into symbols, pictures, and diagrams. An important note: visual/nonverbal learners have often been criticized by "serious" academics because they like pictures and find that they **learn more from video presentations than from lectures**.

**Your primary INTAKE methods should include:**

Lecturers who use gestures and picturesque language  
Pictures, videos, posters, slides  
Flow charts and graphs  
Textbooks with diagrams and pictures  
Symbols and white space

1. Mark up the margins of your textbook with key words, symbols, and diagrams that help you remember the text. Use highlighter pens of contrasting colors to "color code" the information. Take care to mark only important things – if you mark EVERYTHING then nothing stands out.
2. Use outlining or mapping to help make sense of reading assignments. Use pictures and symbols to replace words. Reconstruct the images in different ways trying different spatial arrangements. Then, redraw your pages from memory.
3. As much as possible, translate words and ideas into symbols, pictures, and diagrams. To study for a test, do something you can see: draw pictures, graphic organizers, make time lines ... then post your notes in a place you often see like the bathroom wall so you can recall the pictures made by your notes.
4. Always write down your assignments in one central assignment book.
5. Seeing learners can be tempted to watch too much television because it is visual. Be careful that you don't (and especially not while you are studying)!
6. Use index cards to make flash cards of key information that needs to be memorized. Draw symbols and pictures on the cards to facilitate recall. Use highlighter pens to highlight key words and pictures on the flashcards. Limit the amount of information per card, so your mind can take a mental "picture" of the information. You can color-code or categorize them, separate them into "know" and "don't know yet" piles, or play a memory game with them.
7. When learning mathematical or technical information, make charts to organize the information. When a mathematical problem involves a sequence of steps, draw a series of boxes, each containing the appropriate bit of information in sequence.
8. Use large square graph paper to assist in creating charts and diagrams that illustrate key concepts.
9. Use the computer to assist in organizing material to be memorized. Using word processing, create tables and charts with graphics that help you to understand and retain course material. Use spreadsheet and database software to further organize material that needs to be learned.
10. Look online at the textbook's companion website and make note of what is available.

*You want the whole picture so you are probably holistic rather than reductionist in your approach.. You are often swayed by the look of an object. You are interested in color and layout and design and you know where you are in your environment. You are probably going to draw something.*

## Visual Verbal Learning Style

You learn best when information is **presented visually and in a written format**. If you are a visual/verbal learner you probably prefer the opportunity to **read and reflect at your leisure** rather than having a face-to-face workshop covering the same materials. This type of learner can excel online or in courses which emphasize reading. In a classroom setting, you benefit from instructors who use the blackboard (or overhead projector) to list the essential points of a lecture, or who provide you with an **outline to follow along with during lecture** either on paper or with PowerPoint. You benefit from information obtained from textbooks and class notes. You tend to like to study by yourself in a quiet room. You often see information "in your mind's eye" when you are trying to remember something.

### Your primary INTAKE methods should include:

lists  
headings  
dictionaries  
glossaries  
essays

definitions  
handouts  
textbooks  
readings - library  
notes (often verbatim)

teachers who use words well and have lots of information in sentences and notes  
manuals (computing and laboratory)

1. To aid recall, make use of "color coding" when studying new information in your textbook or notes. Using highlighter pens, highlight different kinds of information in contrasting colors. **Highlight** or underline the main ideas in textbooks whenever possible. Use highlighter pens of contrasting colors to "color code" the information. Take care to mark only important things – if you mark EVERYTHING then nothing stands out.
2. Use outlining or mapping to help make sense of chapter reading assignments. Organize any diagrams, charts etc into words (ex: The trend is ...) Write lists in outline form (a,b,c , 1,2,3) Arrange your words into hierarchies and points.
3. To study for a test, reduce your notes into a learnable package (usually 3:1) and copy your notes again and again, rewrite the ideas and principles into other words.
4. Write out responses to each learning objective found in the introduction to each lesson. This will help you remember vital information. If you are bored with paper, write or draw on a computer, chalkboard or dry erase board as you study.
5. Always write down your assignments in one central assignment book.
6. Seeing learners can be tempted to watch too much television because it is visual. Be careful that you don't (and especially not while you are studying)!
7. Write out sentences and phrases that summarize key information obtained from your textbook and lecture. The very act of writing words helps reinforce the material.
8. Make flashcards of vocabulary words and concepts that need to be memorized. Use highlighter pens to emphasize key points on the cards. Limit the amount of information per card so your mind can take a mental "picture" of the information.
9. When learning information presented in diagrams or illustrations, write out explanations for the information.
10. When learning mathematical or technical information, write out in sentences and key phrases your understanding of the material. When a problem involves a sequence of steps, write out in detail how to do each step.
11. Make use of computer word processing. Copy key information from your notes and textbook into a computer. Use the print-outs for visual review.
12. Before an exam, make yourself visual reminders of information that must be memorized. Make "stick it" notes containing key words and concepts and place them in highly visible places --on your mirror, notebook, car dashboard, etc.
13. Look online at the textbook's companion website and make note of what is available.

*You like this page because the emphasis is on words and lists.*

*You believe the meanings are within the words, so any talk is OK but this handout is better. You are heading for the library.*

## Tactile/ Kinesthetic Learning Style

You learn best when physically engaged in a "hands on" activity. In the classroom, you benefit from a lab setting where you can manipulate materials to learn new information. Since you learn best when physically active, sitting in a lecture course can be challenging. You learn best when you can be physically active in the learning environment. You benefit from instructors who encourage in-class demonstrations, "hands on" student learning experiences, and field work outside the classroom. Keep in mind that this is very difficult to accomplish in most school-type settings. This type of learner often says, *"I really need to be actively and physically involved when I'm learning, or nothing sinks in. This is a real challenge in college, especially in traditional lecture classes. But I take notes, and I also draw pictures all over my notebook pages—anything to keep my hands busy during lecture. Somehow this helps me stay focused on what the instructor is saying."*

### Your primary INTAKE methods should include:

all your senses - sight, touch, taste, smell, hearing  
laboratories  
field trips  
field tours  
examples of principles  
lecturers who give real-life examples

applications  
hands-on approaches (computing)  
trial and error  
collections of rock types, plants, shells, grasses...  
exhibits, samples, photographs...  
recipes, solutions to problems, previous exam papers

1. Use maps, globes, games and puzzles to study whenever possible.
2. Your lecture notes may be poor because the topics were not 'concrete' or 'relevant'. Put plenty of examples into your summary. Use case studies and applications to help with principles and abstract concepts. Use pictures and photographs that illustrate an idea. Recall the experiment or field trip. Convert your "notes" into a learnable package by reducing them (3:1)
3. Talk to another 'K' person about things in your notes. When reviewing new information, copy key points onto a chalkboard, easel board, or other large writing surface. "Teach" the information you learn to your family by using a chalkboard to write or draw the concepts. Facts that must be learned should be written several times. Keep a supply of scratch paper for this purpose. Taking and keeping lecture notes will be very important. Make study sheets.
4. Have someone talk through the information with you while you do something active: shoot baskets, jump rope, or just walk around. When you sit to study, get up frequently and take breaks.
5. Have a parent or teacher help you develop a system to get and stay organized.
6. To help you stay focused on class lecture, sit near the front of the room and take notes throughout the class period. Don't worry about correct spelling or writing in complete sentences. Jot down key words and draw pictures or make charts to help you remember the information you are hearing.
7. When studying, walk back and forth with textbook, notes, or flashcards in hand and read the information out loud.
8. Think of ways to make your learning tangible, i.e. something you can put your hands on. For example, make a model that illustrates a key concept. Spend extra time in a lab setting to learn an important procedure. Spend time in the field (e.g. a museum, historical site, or job site) to gain first-hand experience of your subject matter.
9. To learn a sequence of steps, make 3'x 5' flashcards for each step. Arrange the cards on a table top to represent the correct sequence. Put words, symbols, or pictures on your flashcards -- anything that helps you remember the information. Use highlighter pens in contrasting colors to emphasize important points. Limit the amount of information per card to aid recall. Practice putting the cards in order until the sequence becomes automatic.
10. Make use of the computer to reinforce learning through the sense of touch. Using word processing software, copy essential information from your notes and textbook. Use graphics, tables, and spreadsheets to further organize material that must be learned.
11. Listen to audio tapes on an ipod while exercising. Make your own tapes containing important course information.
12. Look online at the textbook's companion website and make note of what is available.

*You want to experience the exam so that you can understand it.*

*The ideas on this page are only valuable if they sound practical, real, and relevant to you.*

*You need to do things to understand.*

## Auditory/ Verbal Learning Style

You learn best when information is presented auditory in an oral language format. In a classroom setting, you benefit from listening to lecture and participating in group discussions. You also benefit from obtaining information from audio tape. When trying to remember something, you can often "hear" the way someone told you the information, or the way you previously repeated it out loud. You learn best when interacting with others in a listening/speaking exchange.

### Your primary INTAKE methods should include:

attend classes

attend discussions and tutorials

discuss topics with others

discuss topics with your teachers

explain new ideas to other people

use a tape recorder

remember the interesting examples, stories, jokes...

describe the overheads, pictures and other visuals to somebody who was not there

leave spaces in your notes for later recall and 'filling'

1. Your notes may be poor because you prefer to listen. You will need to expand your notes by talking with others and collecting notes from the textbook. Convert them into a learnable package by reducing them 3:1.
2. Read your notes out loud or explain them to another hearing learner.
3. Complete your reading assignments AFTER your teacher discusses the material, whenever possible.
4. Read *difficult* passages aloud instead of silently.
5. Put your summarized notes onto tapes and listen to them. Play the tape at home and when you are riding in the car. When you think you know the material, recite it along with your tape.
6. Use music to help you learn. Put the information to a tune you already know, or make up your own song or jingle. If you prefer, you can create rhymes or poems to help you.  
*Example: In fourteen-hundred-ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue.*
7. Have someone quiz you or study with a friend and go over the information aloud.
8. Study in a quiet place with no outside distractions. Spend time in quiet places recalling the ideas.
9. Join a study group to assist you in learning course material. Or, work with a "study buddy" on an ongoing basis to review key information and prepare for exams.
10. When studying by yourself, talk out loud to aid recall. Get yourself in a room where you won't be bothering anyone and read your notes and textbook out loud.
11. Use audio tapes such as commercial books on tape to aid recall. Download online lectures. Or, create your own audio tapes by reading notes and textbook information into a tape recorder. When preparing for an exam, review the tapes on your car tape player or on an ipod whenever you can.
12. When learning mathematical or technical information, "talk your way" through the new information. State the problem in your own words. Reason through solutions to problems by talking out loud to yourself or with a study partner. To learn a sequence of steps, write them out in sentence form and read them out loud.
13. Look online at the textbook's companion website and make note of what is available.

*You prefer to have this page explained to you.*

*The written words are not as valuable as those you hear.*

*You will probably go and tell somebody about this.*