

Learning Styles

Overview

Learning styles are different ways of taking in and understanding information. These ways are affected by age, experience, physiology, culture, and many other factors.

Learning styles can change over time and can be modified purposely. Information does not always come to you in your preferred way, so you need to be able to both improve on your weaknesses and translate information into your preferred style.

People also switch learning styles depending on what they are studying. Although changing a preferred way of learning offers you flexibility, it is also good for you to capitalize on learning strengths.

Different Learning Styles Frameworks

There are several different inventories to assess learning styles. Finding out your learning style is interesting and can also help you understand why you learn best the way you do. It is helpful to take a learning styles test to identify your various strengths and to be able to improve on weaknesses. The following websites contain both questionnaires to assess your learning style and helpful strategies to make the most of your learning styles.

VAK and VARK

One type of learning style framework divides learning into three preferences: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic, aptly named VAK. A learner who favors visual information will more easily learn information presented in graphs, pictures, and overheads, whereas an auditory learner prefers lectures, reading out loud, and discussing ideas. Kinesthetic learners prefer learning by doing and will learn how to solve problems not by watching or listening to the solution, but by doing it themselves. This framework was expanded from VAK to VARK by Fleming (2001) to include another category: Read/Write (R). R learners prefer the written word and can learn best by reading or writing the information.

For more information on VAK/VARK see these websites:

<http://www.engr.ncsu.edu/learningstyles/ilsweb.html>

<http://www.vark-learn.com/english/index.asp>

<http://tls.utoronto.ca/LearningFair/styles/styles.htm>

Multiple Intelligences

Gardner uses the theory of Multiple Intelligences to understand learning preferences and differences. This framework outlines 9 different types of intelligences:

- 1) Linguistic
- 2) Logical/Mathematical
- 3) Musical/ Rhythmic
- 4) Bodily/ Kinesthetic
- 5) Spatial
- 6) Naturalist
- 7) Interpersonal
- 8) Intrapersonal and
- 9) Existential

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Everyone has skills in each of the areas, but you can use your strongest skills to process information if you are having difficulty with the way it is presented. For example, if you have trouble learning written definitions but have good musical ability, it can be helpful to put information to a tune or to use rhythm when reciting the information.

For more information on Multiple Intelligences, see these websites:

<http://www.ldrc.ca/projects/miinventory/miinventory.php>

http://www2.bgfl.org/bgfl2/custom/resources_ftp/client_ftp/ks1/ict/multiple_int/index.htm

<http://www.personal.psu.edu/staff/b/x/bxb11/MI/MIQuiz.htm>

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is a framework based on the differences personalities bring to learning. There are four dimensions with two polarities each, which can therefore produce 16 different personality combinations. The four dimensions are:

- 1) Extroversion/ Introversion
- 2) Sensing/ Intuition
- 3) Thinking/ Feeling and
- 4) Judging/ Perceptive.

Understanding personality types can help you to assess whether you prefer to work in groups or alone, if you make decisions more often based on logic or on values, and whether you prefer a structured or a spontaneous learning environment.

<http://www2.gsu.edu/~dschjb/wwwmbti.html>

http://www.myersbriggs.org/my_mbti_personality_type/

Bringing it all together

It is important to remember that this is merely a glimpse at the complex phenomenon of learning. However, trying out different strategies will complement tried and true approaches you are already using.

For websites that tie together the different learning theories listed above, check out these links:

<http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/learning/styles.html#kolb>

http://www.support4learning.org.uk/sites/support4learning/education/learning_styles.cfm

http://www.support4learning.org.uk/education/learning_styles.cfm

http://www.xu.edu/lac/learning_styles.htm

Source

Bandler, R., Grinder, J., & O'Stevens, J. (1981). *Frogs into princes: Neurolinguistic programming*. Real People Press.