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What are Learning Styles? How Do I Determine My Child's Learning Style?

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Learning is taking in, understanding, and remembering information in order to apply it in other areas. Students usually learn information in one of three ways: seeing (visually), hearing (auditorily), and experiencing or hands on (kinesthetically). For most students, one of these three processes stands out above the others. Simply stated, some students remember best the things they have seen, some remember best the things they have heard, and others remember best the things they have experienced.

Everybody has a preferred style of learning. Knowing and understanding our learning style helps us to learn more effectively. This is particularly true for students with learning disabilities and/or attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder because of their different ways of learning. Through identifying your child's learning style, he or she will be able to capitalize on his or her strengths and improve his or her self-advocacy skills.



Visual learners need to see the teacher's body language and facial expression to fully understand the content

of a lesson. They tend to prefer sitting at the front of the classroom to avoid visual obstructions (e.g., people's heads). They may think in pictures and learn best from visual displays including: diagrams, illustrated text books, overhead transparencies, videos, flipcharts, and handouts. During a lecture or classroom discussion, visual learners often prefer to take detailed notes to absorb the information.



Visual learners can benefit from...



- Drawing maps or flowcharts of events or scientific processes.



- Making outlines of everything.

- Copying what is on the board.



- Diagramming sentences.

- Taking notes.

- Watching instructional videos.

- Color-coding, circling, underlining, or highlighting words and phrases.

- Outlining reading assignments.

- Using flash cards.

The best test types for visual learners include diagramming, reading maps, outlining to show a process, and writing an essay after studying an outline. The worst test type for visual learners is a listen and respond test.

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(cont.)



Auditory learners learn best through verbal lectures, discussions, talking things through and listening to what others have to say. Auditory learners interpret the underlying meanings of speech through listening to tone of voice, pitch, speed, and other nuances. Written information may have little meaning until the learner hears it. These learners often benefit from reading text aloud and using a tape recorder.

Auditory learners can benefit from...



- Using word association to remember facts and information.
- Making audiotapes of notes after writing them.



- Recording lessons or lectures.
- Watching instructional videos.
- Repeating facts with his or her eyes closed.



- Participating in group or class discussions.
- Using audiotapes when practicing a foreign language or other material.

The best type of test for auditory learners is reading passages and writing answers about them, writing responses to lessons or lectures they have heard, or answering questions by oral examination even in a timed situation.



Kinesthetic/tactile learners learn best through a hands-on approach, actively exploring the physical world around them. They may find it hard to sit still for long periods and may become distracted by their need for activity and exploration.

Kinesthetic learners can benefit from...



- Studying in short blocks.
- Taking lab classes.
- Role playing.
- Taking field trips, visiting museums.



- Studying with others and using memory games.
- Using flash cards to memorize.
- Creating projects to explain lessons or events.

The worst test type for kinesthetic learners is long essay questions. The best type of test for kinesthetic learners would include short definition, fill-ins, and questions with multiple answer choices.

In today's classrooms, teachers are encouraged to create lessons that include these three learning styles in order to accommodate the variety of needs among the students in their classrooms. This, in itself, is a monumental task, especially in the early grades. Some research has found that students can perform better on tests if the teacher will address an individual's learning style, and if the students will change their study habits to fit their personal style. If you cannot identify your child's learning style using the traits of auditory, visual, or kinesthetic (tactile) learners cited above, you may want to consult your child's teacher or school counselor. Parents can also find short quizzes online that may help identify your child's learning style.



Resources:

Flemming, Grace. Learning Styles. Know and use your personal learning style. Retrieved July, 2012.
<http://homeworktips.about.com/od/homeworkhelp/a/learningstyle.htm>
 LDPride.net. Learning styles explained. Retrieved July, 2012 from
<http://www.ldpride.net/learningstyles.MI.htm#Learning%20Styles%20Explained>

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