

DISCOVERING HOW YOU LEARN BEST

Exploring Your Learning Styles

"I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand."

Confucius 551-479BC

Since the early ages, it was noted that people had different learning styles. Similarly today, your brain has developed ways to receive, process and communicate information. In other words, it has 'wired in' patterns of neural pathways which enable you to have a preference to the way you learn. As a child, you developed learning styles primarily from the older children and adults around you - but remember: learning and academic 'intelligence' is not fixed. With recent brain research into what scientists call 'neuroplasticity', we now know that the human brain is incredibly adaptable and can develop different ways to learn. This means learning styles should not be considered absolute but rather act as a general guide to certain strengths and weaknesses.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neuroplasticity>

Having a little understanding about how your brain wires itself to learn is useful because when it comes to revising for exams, you can match the way your brain is wired to the way you practice reviewing, retaining and recalling information for an exam. Hermann's Whole Brain Model might be of interest to you here.

http://www.12manage.com/methods_herrmann_whole_brain.html

Another way to get an overview of how your brain is wired to learn is to undertake a questionnaire and chart your results into a graph.

Below you will find a list of 48 questions relating to eight learning style preferences. You will have all of these to some degree but you may find some are more dominant than others. There are four common styles:

- **Visual** (seeing)
- **Auditory** (listening)
- **Kinaesthetic** (doing/feeling)
- **Analytical** (logical / fact-based).

There are four more styles, each interrelated to the styles listed above. These are:

- **Reading / Writing** (visual)
- **Verbal** (Auditory)
- **Interpersonal** (Kinaesthetic)
- **Sequential** (Analytical)

Knowing your learning style(s) strengths and weaknesses enables you to **rehearse your revision notes in ways that match the way your brain best processes information**. When you do this, you are working with the strongest 'existing wiring' which means the revision process will be a lot more effective and efficient. You can also **practice those weaker styles** so that, in time, more whole-brain wiring develops. For example, if your graph shows that you are not

particularly auditory, (learn well by listening), recording your revision notes to listen to, or repeatedly reciting them, would be a good rehearsal technique to strengthen the wiring in that part of the brain.

The rule is: *'neurons that fire together, wire together'*. This means that if you use multiple ways to revise information, you can strengthen the weaker learning styles by activating them while using dominant ones that already have strong wiring. For instance, a good way to rehearse information if you are not very auditory, but strongly interpersonal, is to get together with friends and recite your notes aloud, (also develops verbal), so you can hear yourself speaking. Verbalising requires understanding so you develop the analytical style as well. Using a variety of different styles simultaneously is called multi-modal and this is something you want to practice as often as possible.

LEARNING STYLES QUESTIONNAIRE

Score each statement below by giving yourself the appropriate number: 1 - 4:

1. Not Like Me 2. A Little Like Me 3. Like Me 4. A Lot Like Me

.....

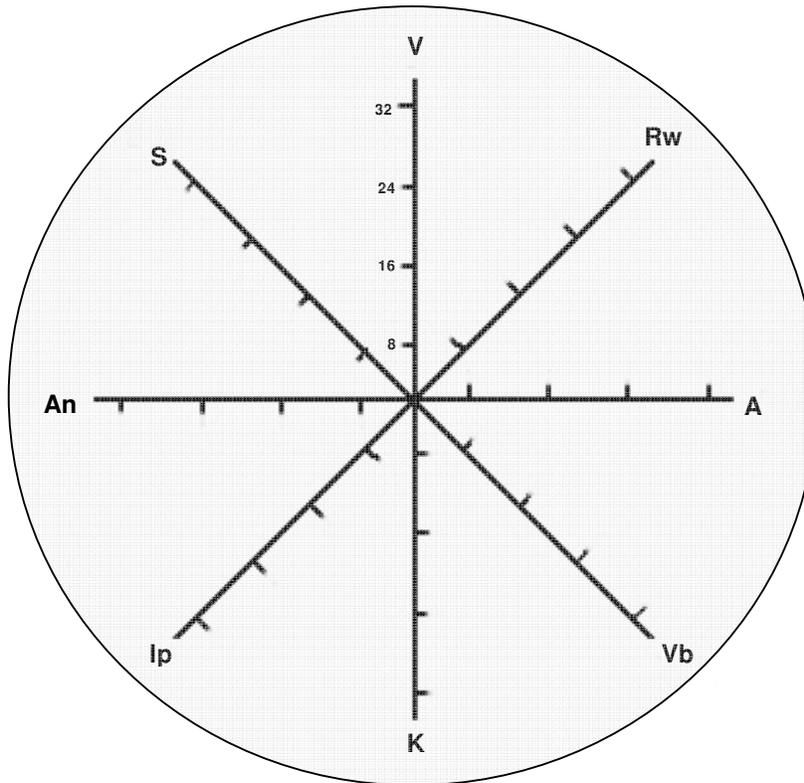
- 1: I enjoy having lots of friends in my life.
- 2: I love reading novels in my spare time.
- 3: I enjoy art and other visual media.
- 4: I often verbalise my thoughts when trying to understand something.
- 5: I enjoy listening to music.
- 6: I like to be on time or arrive early for a class.
- 7: I am good at putting jigsaw puzzles together.
- 8: I am a very outgoing, social person.
- 9: I am good at problem solving.
- 10: I typically follow written instructions better than oral ones.
- 11: I am constantly moving, even when seated (e.g. clicking a pen, fidgeting).
- 12: I enjoy playing a musical instrument.
- 13: I always read the instructions before trying to put something together.
- 14: I remember something easily by repeatedly picturing it in my head.
- 15: I tend to follow oral directions better than written ones.
- 16: I usually study in a structured, organised way.
- 17: I enjoy doing figures in my head.
- 18: I love discussing or debating issues that are important to me.

1. Not Like Me 2. A Little Like Me 3. Like Me 4. A Lot Like Me

- ___ 19: I tend to sense rather than 'see' when I visualise.
- ___ 20: I am a good listener.
- ___ 21: I find it easy organising my thoughts when writing essays.
- ___ 22: I am a very loyal friend.
- ___ 23: I work well with my hands to make or repair things.
- ___ 24: I remember things by writing them down several times and reading them.
- ___ 25: I typically prefer information to be presented visually, (e.g. flipcharts or whiteboard).
- ___ 26: I generally talk at a fast pace.
- ___ 27: I am good at problem solving.
- ___ 28: I prefer activities with step-by-step instructions.
- ___ 29: I have strong feelings about different current issues.
- ___ 30: I am never afraid to say what I think.
- ___ 31: I remember best by drawing pictures and diagrams.
- ___ 32: I enjoy playing a variety of different sports.
- ___ 33: I enjoy participating in discussions.
- ___ 34: I love planning and organising things.
- ___ 35: I love indulging myself in relaxing treats.
- ___ 36: I enjoy science subjects.
- ___ 37: I am good at designing graphs, charts, and other visual displays.
- ___ 38: I often prefer to read a newspaper than listen to the radio.
- ___ 39: I like to use musical jingles to learn and remember things.
- ___ 40: I often feel emotional at the silliest things.
- ___ 41: I prefer to do hands-on activities and field trips as a way to learn.
- ___ 42: I usually greet people I know well with a hug.
- ___ 43: I tend to watch someone's body language to fully understand them.
- ___ 44: I am good at working out mathematical problems.
- ___ 45: I often find myself singing or humming a tune.
- ___ 46: I generally like order and routine in my life.
- ___ 47: I find it easy to read and take notes from text books.
- ___ 48: I generally talk to myself when alone.

Tally up the scores you have given for the following groups of questions. Plot the total into the graph below. This will show you your learning style strengths and weaknesses. Then read about each style from the information that follows.

STYLE	QUESTIONS	TOTAL
Visual - V:	3, 14, 25, 31, 37, 43
Read/Write - Rw:	2, 10, 13, 24, 38, 47
Auditory - A:	5, 12, 15, 20, 39, 45
Verbal - Vb:	4, 18, 26, 30, 33, 48
Kinaesthetic - K:	11, 19, 23, 32, 41, 42
Interpersonal - Ip:	1, 8, 22, 29, 35, 40
Analytical - An:	7, 9, 17, 27, 36, 44
Sequential - S:	6, 16, 21, 28, 34, 46



List your top five here. _____ How would you combine these together as a way to learn and revise information?

YOUR EIGHT LEARNING STYLES

Visual

If you are a dominant visual learner, you learn best by seeing pictures in your mind's eye. You like to make lists, see charts and use diagrams such as concept mapping and colour-coded mind-mapping. You usually enjoy reading. The best way for you to revise information is to convert all your class notes into concept maps and other thinking maps and rehearse your recall by repeatedly reading and rewriting these visual formats from what you can picture in your mind.

Reading / Writing

If you are a dominant reading / writing learner, you will love to do as the name suggests: reading from books or handouts and doing written activities. You will often enjoy reading texts to understand content or reading novels for fun. You generally like written tests and exams or undertaking quizzes. The best way for you to revise information is to repeatedly read class-notes and texts and re-write them in condensed visual key-word formats on paper or on a white board.

.....

Auditory (listening)

If you are an auditory learner, you hear information in your mind. You learn best by attending lectures, listening to seminars or CDs and other audio-recordings. You usually love music and/or play an instrument. The best way for you to revise information is to create revision notes and then convert them to audio recordings and rehearse your recall by listening to them often. You can also hear the information by verbally reciting the ideas aloud. Using ridiculous rhyming mnemonics or music is also helpful.

Verbal (talking)

If you are a verbal learner, you process and communicate information through both self-talk and verbal expression. You will find yourself talking quietly to yourself as you try to understand and rehearse information. The best way for you to revise is to get together with friends in a study group (interpersonal style) and verbalise the ideas aloud. Try acting it out with feeling. This way you get to hear it, (auditory style) and feel it, (kinaesthetic style) as well.

.....

Kinaesthetic (Feeling / Moving)

If you are a kinaesthetic learner, you like to feel and move about. You learn by doing, touching, and feeling. You will often find yourself sitting or lying comfortably or fidgeting with a pencil or pen. The best way for you to revise information is to create condensed revision notes and rehearse your recall by physically 'acting out' the information in the space in front of you. Working in pairs, (interpersonal style) and rehearsing with flash-cards are also helpful. The more ideas can be converted to movement and feeling, the better the recall.

Interpersonal

If you are an interpersonal learner, you enjoy the social interaction that learning with others gives you. You will know yourself to be quite social and outgoing and generally find it easy to make friends. The best way for you to revise information is to get together with friends and work in study groups rehearsing in ways that build on your other styles. NB: The opposite style to this is the solitary learner who prefers to work quietly alone.

Analytical (Logical Understanding)

If you are an analytical learner, you use logical hypothetical reasoning to learn new information. Like the scientist, mathematician or researcher you like to know the facts. One of the best ways for you to revise information is to convert all class notes to condensed formats and rehearse your recall by verbally reciting (verbal style) the ideas in a logical way, as if you were ‘teaching’ the ideas to your friends. Information has to be analytically understood before ‘teaching it’ can take place. Similarly, practising examples that require you to repeatedly work things out, or problem-solve is also useful for you.

Sequential

If you are a sequential learner, you prefer your life to be well organised and planned. Your class-notes are thorough and you find it easy to do things like plan and write essays and assignments. The best way for you to revise is to create lists and sequenced notes like spreadsheets where key-word information is organised sequentially into rows and columns. You then rehearse your recall by repeatedly rewriting, verbalising, and/or positioning the spreadsheet out in open space with your hands (includes a kinaesthetic style).

.....

LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

One of the great things about people is our individual differences to others. There is strength in our diversity. As such, when it comes to learning and revising for exams, you have your own personal strategies for learning, just like your teachers have their own personal strategies for teaching.

Problems can occur, however, when you find that your teachers have different styles to you. Because people tend to communicate in the way that their brain has been most dominantly wired, there can sometimes be a mismatch between teacher as provider of information, and student as receiver.

If this happens to you, try to find creative ways to receive the information that matches your style. This may require peer-tutoring or other outside school tuition. Try talking to your teacher about it – but remember, they are working from a habitual pattern that can be very difficult to change. It is really **your responsibility** and that is why it is important to understand your learning styles and find creative ways to learn and revise information using a variety of styles.

.....

If you would like further information about learning styles, including:

- Creating your ideal study space:
- Reducing distractions:
- Knowing your best times for learning:
- Getting yourself motivated:
- Beating procrastination:
- Improving concentration:
- Managing your revision time:

Please consider the *Breakthrough to Exam Excellence* Course at <https://www.udemy.com/breakthrough-to-exam-excellence/>