

Strengthening Your Learning

There is no one best way to learn. As unique individuals, we all have different learning styles and preferences. However, in the course of our lives, we must adapt to a wide range of learning situations-- and it is highly likely that some of these situations will not conform to our strengths. The trick is to continually to build on our strengths while developing other strategies and skills.

The table below provides explanations for some of the major categories of learning styles and suggests strategies for effective learning.

Learning Styles and Preferences	Strategies to Strengthen These Learning Styles
<p>Visual Visual learners learn best from what they see: diagrams, flowcharts, time lines, films, and demonstrations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Add diagrams to your notes whenever possible.• Organize <u>notes</u> so that you can clearly see main points and supporting facts and how ideas are connected.• Use <u>visual organizers</u> (graphs, charts, symbols, etc.) to help show relationships between concepts/ideas.• Color-code notes to help you to see categories of information• Use visualization as a way to study/prepare for tests and to retrieve information.
<p>Verbal Verbal learners gain the most learning from reading, hearing spoken words, participating in discussions, and explaining things to others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attend lectures and tutorials.• Ask <u>questions</u> to hear more information.• Read the textbook and highlight no more than 10%. (See <u>annotating text</u>.)• Record lectures.• Rewrite your notes and add what you missed from the tape.• Recite or summarize information. (See <u>chunking</u>.)• Talk about what you learn. Work in study groups.• Review information by listening to tapes you have recorded.

<p>Active/Tactile Active learners need to experience knowledge through their own actions either by "doing" or by getting personally involved in their learning. They prefer quick paced instruction-- and instructors that keeps things moving.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize as many senses as possible while learning. • Go to labs, exhibits, tours, etc. to experience the concepts being learned. • Try out example problems and questions. • Study in a group. • Relate the information to concrete examples as you read or listen in lectures. • Think about how you will apply the information being presented. (See <u>questions</u>.) • Pace and recite while you learn. • Act out material or design learning games. • Use flash cards with other people. • Teach the material to someone else.
<p>Reflective Reflective learners understand information best when they have had time to reflect on it on their own (and at their own pace).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study in a quiet setting. • When you are reading, stop periodically to think about what you have read. • Don't just memorize material; think about why it is important and how ideas are related. (See <u>questions</u> and <u>visual organizers</u>.) • Write short summaries of what the material means to you.
<p>Factual Factual learners prefer concrete, specific facts, data, and detailed experimentation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the instructor how ideas and concepts apply in practice. • Ask for specific examples of the ideas and concepts. (See <u>questions</u>.) • Brainstorm specific examples with classmates or by yourself. • Think about how theories make specific connections with the real world.
<p>Theoretical Theoretical learners are more comfortable with big-picture ideas, symbols, and new concepts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a class deals primarily with factual information, try to think of concepts, interpretations, or theories that link the facts together. • Because you become impatient with details, take the time to read directions and test questions before answering, and be sure to check your work. (See <u>test-taking strategies</u>.) • Look for systems and patterns to arrange facts in a way that makes sense to you. (See <u>visual organizers</u>.) • Spend time analyzing the material. (See <u>questions</u>.)

<p>Linear (Left Brain) Linear thinkers find it easiest to learn material presented step by step in a logical, ordered progression. They can work with sections of material without fully understanding the whole picture.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose highly structured courses and instructors. • If you have an instructor who jumps around from topic to topic, spend time outside of class with the instructor or a classmate who can help you fill the gaps in your notes. (Use <u>mapping</u> techniques for taking notes.) • If class notes are random, rewrite the material according to whatever logic helps you to understand it. • Outline the material.
<p>Holistic (Right Brain) Holistic thinkers progress in fits and starts. They may feel lost and unable to solve problems, until they can see the big picture and the relationships between ideas. They need to make sense of details. They tend to be creative.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize that you are not slow or stupid. • Before <u>reading</u> the chapter, preview it by reading all the subheadings, summaries, and any margin glossary terms. • Instead of spending a short time on every subject every night, try immersing yourself in just one subject at a time. • To concentrate on one course at a time, take difficult subjects in summer school or when you have fewer courses. (Warning: Make sure you have enough time to study and to prepare projects and papers. The same amount of material is covered in a shorter time in summer and intersession classes.) • Relate subjects to things you already know. Ask yourself how you would apply the material. (See <u>questions</u>.) • Use <u>maps</u> and <u>visual organizers</u> to help yourself get <u>the big picture</u>.

Adapted in part from a web site developed by Richard M. Felder and Barbara A. Solomon, North Carolina State University at:
www2.ncsu.edu/unigy/lockers/users/f/felder/public/ILSdir/styles.htm