



Understanding Learning Styles by Dr. Henry Khiat, UniSIM

One area that can help to improve your learning process is your awareness of your learning style, i.e. how you receive, process and retain information. Self-knowledge about your own learning style can give you a clearer sense of purpose and lead to empowerment in your learning. Being aware of your own learning style may help you to plan your learning strategies more effectively. While some students retain their dominant learning style throughout their life, others may see their learning styles changing at different stages of their life. Below are the characteristics that mark some of the major learning style preferences that students tend to have. They will help you identify the ways in which you learn best:

Visual learning style

You learn well from seeing words in books and on the white board. You remember and understand information and instructions better if you read them. You can often learn alone with a book. As such, you should take detailed notes of lectures if you want to capitalize on your preference for this style in learning.

Auditory learning style

You learn well from hearing words spoken and from oral explanation. You may remember information by reading aloud, especially when you are learning new concepts. You learn from hearing audio-tapes, lectures and class discussions. Thus, you can gain very much in learning by making study tapes to listen to, by teaching other students, and by talking with your instructors.

Tactile learning style

You learn best from 'hands-on' experiences with materials. That is, working on experiments in a laboratory and handling and building models. Touching and working with materials provide you with the most successful learning situations. As such, physical involvement in class-related activities may help you understand new information more effectively.

Group Learning Style

You learn more easily when you study with at least one other student, and you will be more successful completing work well when you work with others. You value group interaction and class work with other students, and you remember information better when you work in a group. The stimulation you receive from group work helps you learn and understand new information. Therefore, forming a study group can help you learn effectively in your course.



Individual Learning Style

You learn best when you work alone. You think well when you study alone, and you remember information you learn by yourself. You understand concepts best when you learn it alone, and make better progress in learning when you work by yourself. Therefore, always attempt to create such solitary learning environment when you are studying.

Although an awareness of your own learning style can be helpful in your learning process, it is still important not to rely solely on your preferred learning style. This is because the manner some information are presented are sometimes not within your control and thus it might not appeal to your preferred learning style. For example, a lecture may only come in audio mode and thus appeal solely to students who prefer auditory learning style. Thus, in order for your learning process to be more effective, you need to be versatile in dealing with information by building up other learning styles that you do not particularly like. This will allow you to receive, process and retain information through more avenues and in turn enhance your learning ability.