

What are Learning Styles?

Every child is born ready to learn. Yet children (and adults) have ways in which they learn best. A child might succeed in learning through a combination of learning styles, but usually there is one learning style that is favoured over the others.

When you identify the best ways for your child to learn, you will be better equipped to help your child have positive learning experiences.

Did you know that while you may be able to spell by visualizing a word, your child may not be able to memorize his or her spelling words unless he or she writes them on paper first? Or that your child's incessant pencil tapping actually helps him or her stay on task?

There are times when your child may struggle with a particular subject in school - because he or she finds it difficult to understand if it is not taught using your child's preferred learning style. There are ways you can help your child grasp the difficult subjects through practice at home, using your child's best learning style.

You may also be able to talk with your child's teacher and provide your observations about how your child learns best. This may help your child and other children in the class. Many teachers in recent years have become aware of the need to deliver instruction in ways that speak to all different learning styles, but in the past most instruction was delivered verbally, when only about 10 percent of secondary students learn auditorily (by listening).

There is no right or wrong learning style. Your primary learning style may be different from your child's. In order to work effectively with your child, it is important to understand both your own primary learning style as well as your child's.

The Most Common Learning Styles:

The three most common learning styles are:

- Visual
- Auditory
- Physical (Kinaesthetic)

Visual Learners learn by watching. They call up images from the past when trying to remember and picture the way things look in their heads. For example, when spelling a word, they picture the way the word looks.

Visual learners may also:

- Enjoy art and drawing;
- Read maps, charts and diagrams well; and
- Like mazes and puzzles.

Ways to teach visual learners include:

- Making flashcards of key information that needs to be memorized;
- Drawing symbols or pictures;
- Using highlighter pens to highlight key words and pictures;
- Making charts to organize information;
- Translating words and ideas into symbols, pictures and diagrams; and
- Using to-do lists, assignment logs and written notes. (these techniques also benefit physical learners).

Auditory Learners benefit from traditional teaching techniques. Auditory learners succeed when directions are read aloud or information is presented and requested verbally. They remember facts when presented in the form of a poem, song or melody.

Auditory learners also like:

- To tell stories and jokes;
- To play word games; and
- To use tape recorders.

Ways to teach auditory learners include:

- Reading out loud together;
- Encouraging them to read out loud when they study, so they can "hear" the instruction;
- Studying with a partner, so they can talk out the solutions to problems; and
- Writing out a sequence of steps to solve a problem, then reading the steps out loud.

Physical Learners learn best through movement and physical manipulation. They like to find out how things work and to touch, feel and experience what they are being asked to learn. Most children enter kindergarten as physical learners, but by second or third grade their learning styles may change to visual or auditory. Half of all students in high school and beyond remain physical learners. Physical learners may also:

- Show a need to manipulate, handle and try things out;
- Have a short attention span;
- Need to be moving in order to learn; and
- Show you things rather than telling you about them.

Ways to teach physical learners include:

- Letting them participate in science or math laboratories;
- Creating and participating in drama presentations;
- Going on field trips;
- Creating and performing skits and dances;
- Encouraging them to take notes and draw diagrams; and
- Having the students make models.