

## What is meant by Learning Styles ?

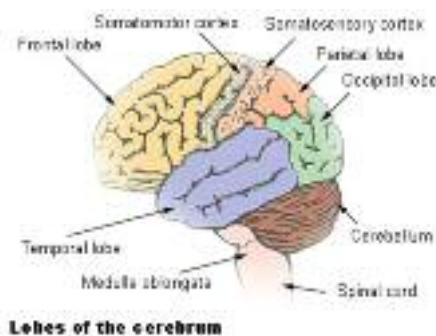
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Many people recognise that each person prefers different learning styles and techniques. Learning styles group common ways that people learn. Everyone has a mix of learning styles. Some people may find that they have a dominant style of learning, with far less use of the other styles. Others may find that they use different styles in different circumstances. There is no correct mix and nor are styles fixed. You can develop ability in less dominant styles, as well as further develop styles that you already use well.

Using multiple learning styles and “multiple intelligences” for learning is a relatively new approach – pioneered by Harvard psychologist, Howard Gardner (1997). This approach is one that teachers and lecturers have only recently started to recognise. Traditional schooling used (and continues to use) teaching through language and logical methods. It also uses a limited range of learning and teaching techniques. Many schools still rely on classroom and book-based teaching, much repetition, and pressured exams for reinforcement and review. As a result of this we often label those who use these learning styles and techniques as “bright.” Those who use less favoured learning styles often find themselves in lower classes, with various not-so-complimentary labels and sometimes lower quality teaching. This can create positive and negative spirals that reinforce the belief that one is either “smart” or “dumb.”



By recognising and understanding your own learning styles, you can use techniques better suited to you. This improves the speed and quality of your learning.

Your learning styles have more influence than you may realise. Your preferred styles guide the way you learn. They also change the way you internally represent experiences, the way you recall information, and even the words you choose.

Research shows us that each learning style uses different parts of the brain. By involving more of the brain during learning, we remember more of what we learn. Researchers using brain-imaging technologies have been able to find out the key areas of the brain responsible for each learning style.

The learning styles are:

## Visual.

The occipital lobes at the back of the brain manage the visual sense. Both the occipital and parietal lobes manage spatial orientation. If you use the visual style, you prefer using images, pictures, colours, and maps to organise information and communicate with others. You can easily visualise objects, plans and outcomes in your mind's eye. You also have a good spatial sense, which gives you a good sense of direction. You can easily find your way around using maps, and you rarely get lost. When you walk out of a lift, you instinctively know which way to turn. You love drawing, scribbling and doodling, especially with colours. You typically have a good dress sense and colour balance (although not always!).

## Auditory.

The temporal lobes handle auditory content. The right temporal lobe is especially important for music. If you use the auditory style, you like to work with sound and music. You have a good sense of pitch and rhythm. You typically can sing, play a musical instrument, or identify the sounds of different instruments. Certain music invokes strong emotions. You notice the music playing in the background of movies, TV shows and other media. You often find yourself humming or tapping a song or jingle, or a theme or jingle pops into your head without prompting.

## Verbal.

The temporal and frontal lobes, especially two specialized areas called Broca's and Wernicke's areas (in the left hemisphere of these two lobes) handle language. The verbal style involves both the written and spoken word. If

you use this style, you find it easy to express yourself, both in writing and verbally. You love reading and writing. You like playing on the meaning or sound of words, such as in tongue twisters, rhymes, limericks and the like. You know the meaning of many words, and regularly make an effort to find the meaning of new words. You use these words, as well as phrases you have picked up recently, when talking to others.

## **Physical.**

The cerebellum and the motor cortex (at the back of the frontal lobe) handle much of our physical movement. If the physical style is more like you, it's likely that you use your body and sense of touch to learn about the world around you. It's likely you enjoy sports and exercise, and other physical activities such as gardening or woodworking. You like to think out issues, ideas and problems while you exercise. You would rather go for a run or walk if something is bothering you, rather than sitting at home.

## **Logical.**

The parietal lobes, especially the left side, drive our logical thinking. If you use the logical style, you like using your brain for logical and mathematical reasoning. You can recognise patterns easily, as well as connections between seemingly meaningless content. This also leads you to classify and group information to help you learn or understand it.

You work well with numbers and you can perform complex calculations. You remember the basics of trigonometry and algebra, and you can do moderately complex calculations in your head.

## **Social.**

The frontal and temporal lobes handle much of our social activities. The limbic system also influences both the social and solitary styles. The limbic system has a lot to do with emotions, moods and aggression. If you have a strong social style, you communicate well with people, both verbally and non-verbally. People listen to you or come to you for advice, and you are sensitive to their motivations, feelings or moods. You listen well and understand other's views. You may enjoy mentoring or counselling others.

You typically prefer learning in groups or classes, or you like to spend much one-on-one time with a teacher or an instructor. You heighten your learning by bouncing your thoughts off other people and listening to how they respond. You prefer to work through issues, ideas and problems with a group. You thoroughly enjoy working with a "clicking" or synergistic group of people.

## **Solitary.**

The frontal and parietal lobes, and the limbic system, are also active with this style. If you have a solitary style, you are more private, introspective and independent. You can concentrate well, focusing your thoughts and feelings on your current topic. You are aware of your own thinking, and you may analyze the different ways you think and feel. You spend time on self-analysis, and often reflect on past events and the way you approached them. You take time to ponder and assess your own accomplishments or challenges. You may keep a journal, diary or personal log to record your personal thoughts and events.

You like to spend time alone. You may have a personal hobby. You prefer travelling or holidaying in remote places away from crowds.

Your learning styles therefore, have more influence than you may have realised. Your preferred styles guide the way you learn. They also change the way you internally represent experiences, the way you recall information, and even the words you choose.