

TOPIC

# Learning Styles

Helping students **PREPARE, ADVANCE** and **EXCEL.**

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## CAMPUSES

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(above cafeteria)  
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**Knight**, Room 3540  
(third floor, library)  
401-825-1170

**Liston**, Room 2236  
(second floor, next to library)  
401-455-6116

**Newport**, Room 251 & 252  
(within library)  
401-851-1701

## Learning styles

Learning is an individualized process; different educational and background experiences, personality traits, levels of motivation and numerous other variables affect the way you learn. Individuals think and reason differently, so each person has a different learning style that refers to the general way he/she prefers to have information presented. Learning styles allow people to problem-solve, process, learn and remember new information in their own ways.



Just as students have preferred learning styles, instructors can often have preferred teaching styles. Some teaching styles include lecture, demonstration, and discussion. It is important for students to recognize their instructors' teaching style to make

adjustments to their learning, study and classroom styles. You can maximize your learning when you understand your preferred learning style and select study strategies that capitalize on your learning preferences and personal strengths.

People don't use one particular learning style exclusively, and there is usually significant overlap in learning styles. There are many learning style assessments and inventories that can be used to help students determine their predominant learning style. One such assessment is a companion piece to this handout. It is a questionnaire and guide titled **VAR-K-A Guide to Learning Styles** ([www.vark-learn.com](http://www.vark-learn.com)). You may be asked to complete this questionnaire.

Please remember that assessments are not scientific tools and that you should use the results as a guide for understanding your learning preferences and as a resource for improving your study strategies.

## Characteristics and tips for visual learners

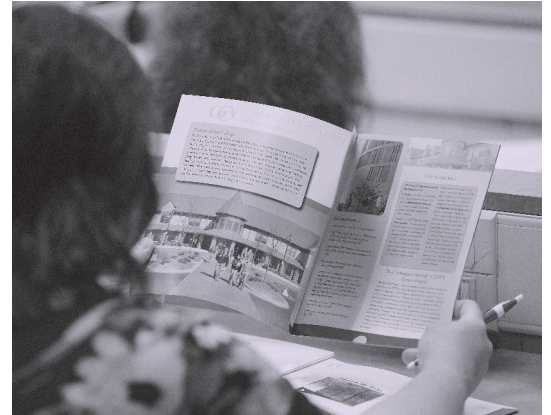
Visual learners relate most effectively to written information, notes, diagrams and pictures. Typically, they will be unhappy with a presentation if they are unable to take detailed notes – to an extent information does not exist for a visual learner unless it has been written down and presented visually. This is why some visual learners take notes even when they have printed course notes on the desk in front of them.

### Visual learners

- Can easily recall information in the form of numbers, words, phrases or sentences
- Can easily understand and recall information presented in pictures, charts or diagrams
- Have strong visualization skills and can look up (often up to the left) and “see” information
- Can make “movies in their minds” of information they are reading
- Have strong visual-spatial skills that involve size, shapes, textures, angles and dimensions
- Pay close attention and learn to interpret body language (facial expressions, eyes, stance)
- Have a keen awareness of aesthetics, the beauty of the physical environment and visual media

### Tips for visual learners

1. When you read, use different colored highlighter pens to highlight important information such as facts, definitions, formulas and steps. Colors often stand out better and create stronger visual images in your memory.
2. Take time to visualize pictures, charts, graphs or small sections of printed information. Follow this with time to practice recalling the visual memories when you study and review.
3. Create movies in your mind with information that you read or hear. Use your visual memory as a television screen with the information moving across the screen in an organized way.



4. Create visual study tools such as visual mappings, hierarchies and comparison charts to represent information that you are studying. Show several levels of detail in your visual study tools.
5. Expand the chapter mapping at the beginning of each chapter. Add detail next to each chapter heading. Add color, shapes or pictures next to the main ideas or key details.
6. Enhance your notes, flash cards, or any other study tools by adding colors and pictures so that the information stands out more clearly in your memory.
7. Copy information in your own handwriting. Practice looking away and visualizing the information.
8. Use keen visual skills to observe people to pick up clues that tell you the importance of what they are saying, their attitudes or feelings toward the subject, and what you are expected to know.
9. Carry a pen and a notebook with you so you can write down information or directions. You can study or memorize the information at a later time.

## Characteristics and tips for aural learners

Aural learners relate most effectively to the spoken word. They will tend to listen to a lecture and then take notes afterward, or rely on printed notes. Often information written down will have little meaning until it has been heard. It may help auditory learners to read written information out loud. Auditory learners may be sophisticated speakers.

### Aural learners

- Learn best by hearing information
- Can accurately remember details of information heard in conversations or lectures
- Have strong language skills that include well-developed vocabularies and an appreciation of words
- Have strong oral communication skills that enable them to carry on conversations and be articulate
- Hear tones, rhythms and notes of music and often have exceptional musical talents
- Have “finely tuned” ears and may find learning a foreign language relatively easy

### Tips for aural learners

1. Talk out loud to explain new information, express your ideas, paraphrase another speaker or summarize a lecture or a conversation.
2. Read out loud (verbalize), with a normal voice or with exaggerated expression, to help increase comprehension and clarify confusing information. The natural rhythm and patterns in language often help group information into meaningful units automatically.
3. Ask questions to show your interest, seek clarification and interact with others. Asking questions opens the door for receiving verbal information and encoding information into your memory system through your auditory channel.
4. Work with a tutor, a “study buddy” or in a study group. Studying with others provides the opportunity to ask questions, articulate answers, explain to others and express your ideas.

5. Recite frequently when you study. Reciting involves recalling information, stating the information out loud, in your own words and in complete sentences, without reading or referring to printed information. Reciting provides you with instant feedback about your level of understanding.
6. For lectures in a difficult class, take notes in class, but back up your notes by taping the lecture. (Ask for the instructor’s consent before taping.) After class, review only the sections of the lecture on tape that you found unclear or confusing.
7. Make your own study tapes by either reading or reciting the main ideas, facts or significant details that you need to learn. Studying tapes that have your own voice often strengthens auditory memory and recall.
8. Explain information that you are learning to another person or even to an imaginary person.
9. Being able to explain information clearly can prove feedback about your level of understanding.



10. Create rhymes, jingles or songs to help you remember specific facts.
11. Use technology with audio features or voice-activated software. Spellcheckers, calculators and CD-ROM programs are a few examples of products available to auditory learners.

## Characteristics and tips for kinesthetic learners

Kinesthetic learners learn effectively through touch, movement and space. They also learn skills by imitation and practice. They appreciate instructors who use real-life examples and prefer hands-on approaches to learning. Predominantly kinesthetic learners can appear slow, in that information is normally not presented in a style that suits their learning methods.



### Kinesthetic learners

- Learn best by using their hands (*“hands-on” learning*) or by full body movement
- Learn best by doing
- Learn well in activities that involve performing (*e.g., athletes, actors, dancers*)
- Work well with their hands in areas such as repair work, sculpting, art or working with tools
- Are well coordinated, with a strong sense of timing and body movements
- Often wiggle, tap their feet or move their legs when they sit
- Often have been labeled “hyperactive”

### Tips for kinesthetic learners

1. Handle objects, tools or machinery that you are studying. For example, handle the rocks in a geology class, or repeat computer applications several times.
2. Create manipulatives (*study tools that you can move around with your hands*). Flash cards or index cards, for example, can be created and then shuffled, spread out, sorted or stacked into categories.
3. Cut charts or diagrams apart so that you can practice assembling them in their correct order.
4. Use exaggerated movements and hand gestures when you study. Drama, dance, pantomime and role-playing use large muscle movements. Moving or pointing fingers and expressing information and emotions through hand gestures involve small muscle movement.
5. Use a computer to type information and access muscle memory through keyboard strokes.
6. Walk as you recite or practice information. Pacing or walking with study materials in hand helps some people learn without being distracted by the discomfort of sitting too long.
7. Work at a chalkboard, flip chart or large poster paper to create study tools. List, draw, practice or write while you stand up and work on a large surface.
8. Learn through creative movement and activities. For example, if you are studying perimeters in math, tape off an area of a room and walk the perimeter.
9. Create action games. Convert the information you are studying into a game, such as Twenty-One Questions, Jeopardy or Concentration. Review the information by playing the game with someone else.



## Characteristics and tips for read/write learners

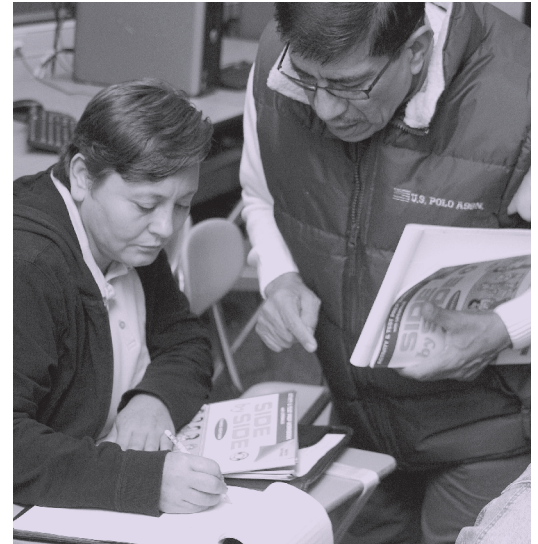
Read/write learners learn primarily by reading and writing. They prefer to learn information by reading notes, handouts and textbooks. These learners make use of dictionaries and other reference materials. They also benefit by rewriting notes and rereading notes silently again and again.

### Read/write learners

- Learn best by writing and rewriting information
- Use lists, headings, dictionaries, glossaries and definitions to understand concepts
- Work well with textbooks, handouts and manuals
- Often take notes verbatim in class
- Do well with multiple choice and essay tests
- Learn best by reading and rereading the textbook or their notes, writing and rewriting their notes, and, in general, organizing items into lists.

### Tips for read/write learners

1. Write out the words again and again.
2. Read your notes (*silently*) again and again.
3. Rewrite the ideas and principles into other words.
4. Organize any diagrams, graphs, etc., into statements, (*e.g.*, “*The trend is...*”)
5. Turn reactions, actions, diagrams, charts and flows into work.
6. Imagine your lists arranged as multiple choice questions and distinguish one from another.
7. Write exam answers.
8. Practice with multiple choice questions.
9. Write paragraphs, beginnings, and endings.
10. Write your lists (a, b, c, d, 1, 2, 3, 4).



## Characteristics and tips for multimodal learners

Multimodal learners, as the name implies, use a variety of learning preferences and will adapt their learning styles to particular problems or environments. They may or may not have two strong preferences. A concern for multimodal learners is selecting the correct learning style for the task at hand. If you have multiple preferences, you are in the majority, as somewhere between 50 and 70 percent of any population seems to fit into that group.

Multiple preferences are interestingly varied. For example you may have two strong preferences V and A or R and K, or you may have three strong preferences such as VAR or ARK. Some people have no particular strong preferences, and their scores are almost even for all four modes.

If you have two almost equal preferences, please read the study strategies that apply to your own two choices. If you have three preferences, read the three lists that apply and similarly for those with four. You will need to read two, three or four lists of strategies. One interesting piece of information that people with multimodal preferences have told us is that it is necessary for them to use more than one strategy for learning and communicating; they feel insecure with only one. Alternatively, those with a single preference often “get it” by using the set of strategies that align with their single preference.

