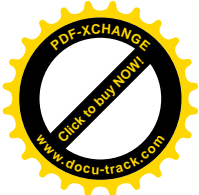




Learning styles, autonomy & memory

How to improve your
ability to learn and retain
new words



Learning Styles

What is a learning style?

A learning style is simply a preference for the method by which you learn and remember what you learned.

Where do learning styles come from?

Your learning style will be influenced by your genetic make-up, your previous learning experiences, your culture and the society you live in.

You may have some scores in each of the 3 learning styles but you will usually have a preference for 1 style.

Why is it important to know about them?

Your learning style will indicate how you (prefer to) learn, the types of learning activities that work best for you. If you know about your own learning style you can be more independent and more successful in your learning.

Is my learning style fixed?

You will always have the natural strength in your preferred learning style(s) but you can **increase your learning power and use more of your brain by adding other learning style strategies to your preferred style.**

NB: Exams are mostly given in the visual, written learning style. Visual input and retrieval strategies work best for those types of exams.

If you want to do a very short learning styles inventory to see which your preferred learning style is, go to www.howtolearn.com - you will have to register with your email address. I have done this and you receive further emails from the site, which are easy to ignore/delete. It has not led to any increase in SPAM!

Visual Learning Style

- learns best by seeing
- neat, orderly
- speaks quickly, holds head up, shoulders erect
- good long range planners
- good spellers
- memorises by strong visual associations
- functions best with overall view before proceeding
- has trouble remembering verbal instructions – unless written down



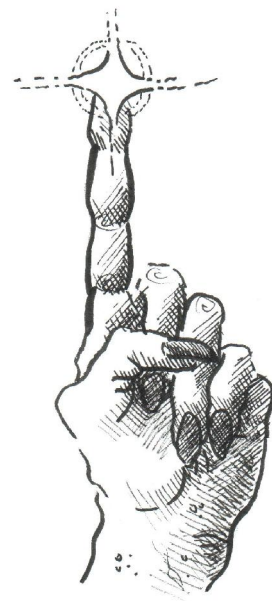
Auditory Learning Style

- learns best through hearing
- likes to listen to talks, music or lectures
- good story tellers
- talks to self
- likes talking more than writing
- easily distracted by noise – generally can't listen to someone talk on phone and listen to another person talking to them at the same time
- may have problems with projects involving visualisation
- likes jokes better than comics



Kinaesthetic Learning Style

- learns best by doing and through movement
- often good athletes
- speaks more slowly
- memorises by moving around, walking etc..
- gestures a lot
- doesn't mind clutter/mess in workspace
- using action words when speaking
- wants to act things out



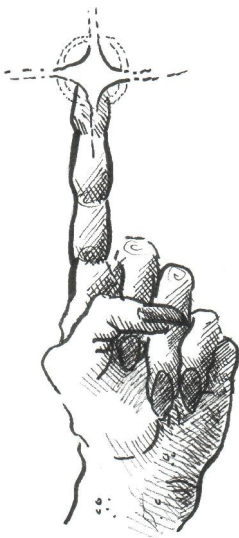
Some strategies for the 3 learning styles



Concept maps with pictures to represent words
Spider diagrams also using images
Mental movies



Talk out loud
Listen to others explaining material
Read notes out loud
Use rhymes
Learn with music
Make tapes of the material and listen to them
Teach others out loud



Walk or pace around (regular, steady steps)
Learn in groups
Create games
Make notes on post-its and arrange on a big sheet (A3)
Act out material you are learning

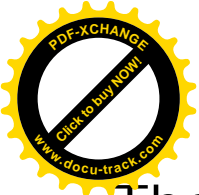


The key is to match the learning strategy and input style to the way in which you are going to be tested on that material:

- if you are going to take a test out loud (oral) then study the material aloud and rehearse it aloud

- if you are taking a test by acting things out or demonstrating physically that you understand something then study the material in the same way. (you would not rehearse a stage production by writing lots of notes)

- if you are taking written tests, make sure you are making visual pictures as you learn the material so you can retrieve these later in the test. Rehearse the test in writing while practising visual images and this will help to fix the learning in your long-term memory.



The importance of Visual Memory Techniques

Because most tests are written, and retrieval of verbal information (words) is greatly enhanced when the learner has stored pictures/is using visual memory, all learners will want to improve their ability to 'visualise' when they learn.

Research has found that one way to do this is by making use of the **natural eye-brain connection** that exists. Visual learners look upward and to the side when recalling or processing information and project images onto an imaginary screen.

To locate your own visual memory, do the following with a partner:

Answer one or several of the following questions:

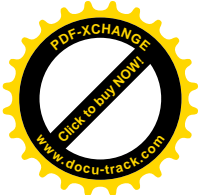
Get a picture of your best friend in your mind. Tell me exactly how he or she looks. What colour is his/her hair, eyes etc.? What does his/her favourite item of clothing look like?

What was your mother/friend/teacher/brother/sister wearing yesterday? Get a picture of him/her in your mind and describe what he/she is wearing.

Describe your favourite film to me. Tell me exactly how a favourite character or scene looked. What were they wearing? How did they look when a certain event happened? Describe the location. Was there any interesting equipment in the film? A specific car, plane, boat, jet ski? Describe it to me exactly. Colour, type, specific markings etc...

What does a picture in your room look like? Describe it to me exactly.

Watch your partner's eyes carefully. When he/she begins to create a picture and describe it to you, he/she will look upwards either to the right or the left, (or very occasionally up and in front) Recreating this eye movement when trying to visualise new knowledge whilst learning and then again when trying to recall it will greatly enhance your ability to remember.



Brain researchers have shown many times that the power of memory is multiplied many times if we connect an association to the picture asking **What does this sound like/remind me of?**

An association is simply something that is connected to and reminds us of something else. Author David Sousa says, "Whenever two events, actions or feelings are learned together they are said to be associated or bonded, so that the recall of one prompts the spontaneous recall of the other. The word Romeo elicits Juliet, Batman gets Robin."

Word-Picture association

1. Choose a word, look at it and say it out loud.
2. What does the sound of the word remind you of? (at this stage don't think of the real meaning of the word, only what the sound of the word makes you think of)
3. Now think of the actual meaning of your new word. Create a picture (looking up and to the side) in your mind of your association and the real meaning of the word – make the mental image as humorous and detailed as you can and hold the picture in your mind.
4. Now draw the picture – use as much colour as you can as this also enhances memory!
5. Now write the word under the picture you have drawn.
6. In another colour write the English meaning of the word in the top corner (right or left depending on where your visual memory is) of the card.
7. Hold your card up above eye level in your own visual memory position and say the word and the English meaning several times.
8. Now you are going to be tested on this vocabulary – sit as if you are successful!
9. As you are recalling each word, use your visual memory – look upward and to the right/left.

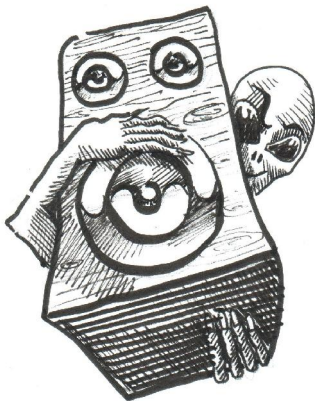
Step – by – step successful spelling

1. Write the word onto a piece of coloured card, using different coloured pens to emphasise unique letters which do not sound as they are spelled.
2. Hold the card up in your visual memory location – up to the left or up to the right.
3. Trace the letters with a finger (still holding card in visual memory position) and saying the word aloud.
4. Take a mental snapshot of the word – imagine a camera in your brain taking a picture of the word and storing it on your visual memory screen.
5. Write the word down on your paper. Look up and remember (visualise) how it looked on the visual memory screen.
6. Compare what you wrote down with the word card. Expect success!





Why music can make you learn better



When your body feels/hears the even, one beat per second of Baroque music, your heart rate and pulse relax to the beat. When you are in this relaxed, but alert state, your mind is able to concentrate more easily. Music corresponds to and affects our physiological conditions. During heavy mental work, our pulse and blood pressure rise and it's usually more difficult to concentrate in this state. The right music can counteract this effect, reducing blood pressure and pulse rate and increasing the ability to learn at the same time.

Why what you eat will effect your learning & test performance

Eating protein

It is claimed that eating protein before exams helps to keep energy levels up and makes you more alert. Eating carbohydrates like breads, pastas and sugary cereals can cause you to become tired and sluggish due to the sudden rise and subsequent drop in your blood sugar.

If you eat peanuts or raw almonds about 20 minutes before exams, some research has found that you think better and faster. Nuts supply choline and lecithin that feed the neurotransmitters in the brain and improve memory. Eating protein helps you to think more clearly for longer periods of time. (N/A for those with nut allergies obviously!)



Eating foods rich in Omega 3 essential fatty acids (or take Omega 3 supplements)

Eating salmon, tuna, sardines, herring, flax seeds or flax oil will all help to increase the levels of omega 3 essential fatty acids in the system. Use olive oil on your salad and when you cook.

Research from the Archives of Neurology (July 2003) stated that eating omega rich foods significantly reduces the risk of Alzheimer's, stroke, heart disease, and improves memory by helping nerve cells fire more efficiently.



Some techniques for enhanced revision

summarise

Look over the material before you read it thoroughly.
Check the chapter names and any bold heading in each chapter.
This gives the brain an overview of what's in the chapter.

question

In a notebook, turn all the bold headings into questions for you to answer.
Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?

read

Read for a purpose. Read to answer your own questions.

remember

Recite the material to yourself.
Create spider diagrams with pictures that summarise what you have read.
Hold the summary up to your visual memory and rehearse the material.
Snap a picture of your summary and place it in your visual memory.

review

Review material just before the test.
Use your visual memory eye position
Listen to 60-beat per second music to accelerate your learning
Sit or stand exactly as you do when you are feeling your most successful!