

Study Advice Services

Part of the IfL Centre for Learning Development

Learning Styles

This booklet contains information and activities that will help you to:

- Understand what a learning style is
- Understand how it can help you in your studies
- Find out about your personal learning style
- Find out about various learning preferences
- Think about the best strategies to adopt

What is a learning style?

It is a unique collection of individual skills and preferences that affect how a person perceives, gathers and processes information.

Why find out about learning styles?

It has been recognised that learners have a variety of individual learning styles. On the one hand, for all learners to have a maximum chance of success, learning environments have to be flexible in order to accommodate different learning styles. On the other hand, good learners have to develop strategies to adapt to using a variety of environments.

If there is a mismatch between your learning style and the way learning materials are presented to you, then:

- You are less effective
- You may lose motivation
- You are more likely to give up

Knowing about your learning style will help you to:

- Plan for learning tasks
- Learn more effectively
- Be more satisfied
- Be more motivated

Being aware of your natural weaknesses will help you to:

- Understand why you are not performing adequately
- Develop strategies to cope with certain activities
- Set targets for improvement

Remember!

No style is better than another, but being aware of your personal preference will help you to adapt to others and react appropriately to environments and methods which are not compatible with your style.

Learning styles questionnaire

This questionnaire allows you to create a profile of yourself as a learner, and so provide you with information which could help you to design ways of learning particularly suitable to your own needs and personality. Read the explanation below for advice on completing the first part of the questionnaire.

Preferred Learning Style

Look at the four statements (a – d) in each section and decide how they refer to you. Allocate marks to each statement in the corresponding boxes (a – d), using the scale 1– 4 as follows:

- 4 marks for the statement which best refers to you
- 3 marks for the second best
- 2 for the third
- 1 for the statement which describes you least well

Complete this section before looking at the summary section or the information on evaluation.

Questions

- | | | |
|----|--|-----|
| 1. | a I like to get involved | a = |
| | b I like to take my time before acting | b = |
| | c I am particular about what I like | c = |
| | d I like things to be useful | d = |
| 2. | a I like to try things out | a = |
| | b I like to analyse and break things into parts | b = |
| | c I am open to new experiences | c = |
| | d I like to look at all sides of issues | d = |
| 3. | a I like to watch | a = |
| | b I like to follow my feelings | b = |
| | c I like to be doing things | c = |
| | d I like to think about things | d = |
| 4. | a I accept people and situations the way they are | a = |
| | b I like to be aware of what is around me | b = |
| | c I like to evaluate | c = |
| | d I like to take risks | d = |
| 5. | a I have gut feelings and hunches | a = |
| | b I have a lot of questions | b = |
| | c I am logical | c = |
| | d I am hard-working and get things done | d = |
| 6. | a I like things that I can see, feel, touch or smell | a = |
| | b I like to be active | b = |
| | c I like to observe | c = |
| | d I like ideas and theories | d = |

7. a I prefer learning in the here and now a =
 b I like to consider and think about things b =
 c I tend to think about the future c =
 d I like to see the results of my work d =
8. a I have to try things out for myself a =
 b I rely on my own ideas b =
 c I rely on my observations c =
 d I rely on my feelings d =
9. a I am quiet and reserved a =
 b I am energetic and enthusiastic b =
 c I tend to reason things out c =
 d I am responsible about things d =

Summary

The grid below is used to summarize your scores. Complete it by writing in the mark 1- 4 you gave for each question a-d. In the first box in the first column, for example, you write the mark which you gave to sentence 1a. Note that not all the marks are recorded here; this is to prevent patterning and to allow for the inclusion of distractors.

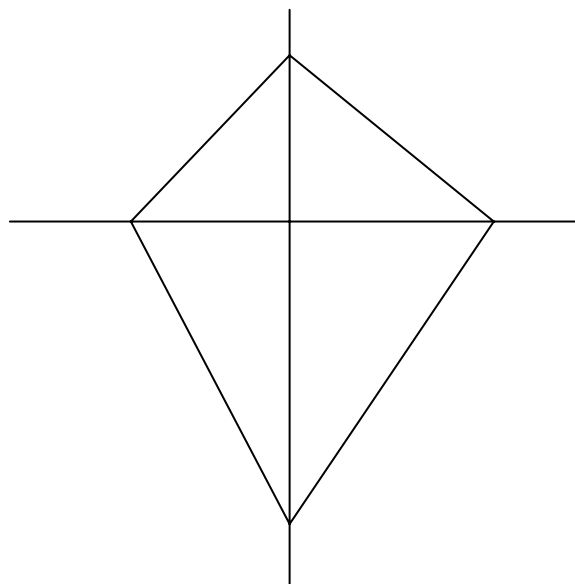
CE	RO	AC	AE
1a =	1b =	2b =	2a =
2c =	2d =	3d =	3c =
3b =	3a =	4c =	6b =
4a =	6c =	6d =	7b =
8d =	8c =	8b =	8a =
9b =	9a =	9c =	9d =
Tot =	Tot =	Tot =	Tot =

Total scores:

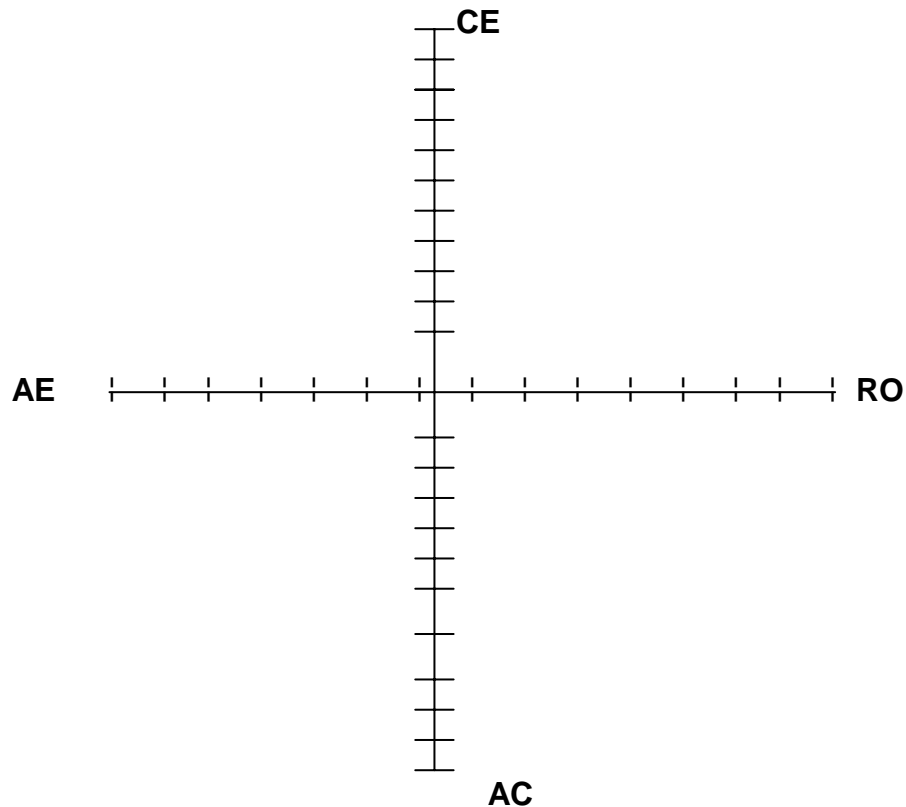
CE = RO = AC = AE =

Now plot the total scores on the four axes in the personal diagram below. You can then produce your own personal "kite" by joining the four scores, as shown in the example diagram, below.

Example of kite

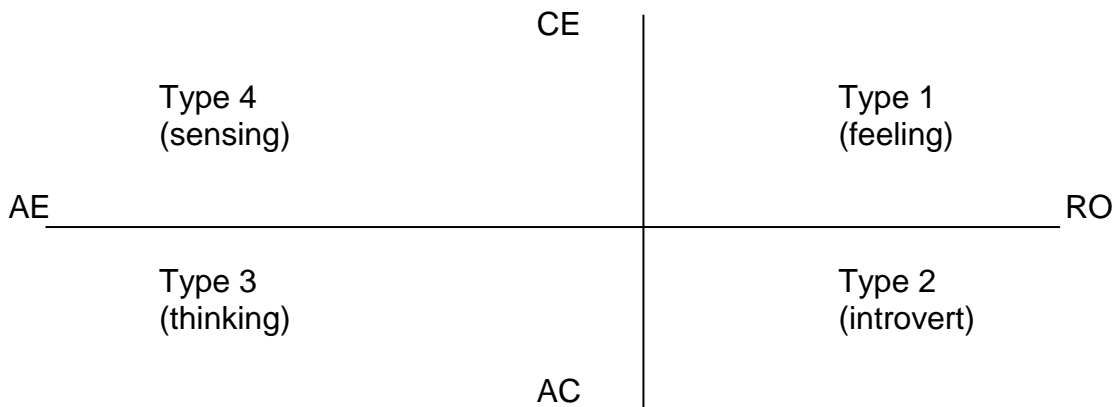


Personal diagram



Evaluation

The four axes provide us with four quadrants which indicate the kind of person you are (Kolb D.A. 1976).



The four axes:

CE – Concrete experience

You are more interested in experiencing reality than looking at theory. You are good at relating to others and are good at making intuitive decisions. You are open-minded about life.

RO – Reflective observation

You prefer to understand rather than apply ideas. You prefer to know what is true or how things happen rather than how things work. You value patience, impartiality and thoughtful judgment.

AC – Abstract conceptualization

You are logical and like new ideas. You prefer to think a situation through rather than rely on instinct. You like precision and the discipline of organized life.

AE – Active experimentation

You like to influence people and change situations. You prefer to learn things that have a practical application. You are willing to take a risk to achieve your goals. You like to influence people and see results.

The four quadrants:

Take the quadrants in which your two highest scores occur and read the appropriate passages below.

- **Learner type 1: the reflective learner**

You seek hidden meaning and need to be involved personally. You learn by listening and sharing ideas. You are interested in people. You excel in viewing concrete situations from many perspectives and model yourself on those you respect.

Strength: innovation and imagination

Goal: self-involvement in important issues, bringing unity

Favourite question: Why? / Why not?

Careers: counselling, personnel and humanities

Your preferred strategies may include:

- organisation in advance
- allowing time for reflection
- self-management
- self-evaluation
- group work
- discussion groups
- deduction

- **Learner type 2: the analytic learner**

You seek facts. You learn thinking through ideas. You perceive information abstractly and process it reflectively. You are particularly interested in ideas and concepts. You are thorough and industrious. You function by adapting to the experts.

Strength: creating concepts and models

Goal: self-satisfaction and intellectual recognition

Favourite question: What?

Careers: basic sciences, maths, research, planning departments

The strategies you might like include:

- organisation in advance
- directed teaching
- systematic note-taking
- testing yourself regularly
- receiving regular feed-back from experts
- constructive research

- **Learner type 3: the common-sense learner**

You need to know how things you are asked to do will help in real life. You learn by testing theories in ways that seem sensible. You perceive information abstractly and process it actively. You use factual data to build designed concepts; you need hands-on experiences and enjoy solving problems by yourself.

Strength: practical application of ideas

Goal: to bring your view of the present into line with future security

Favourite question: How does this work?

Careers: engineering, physical sciences, nursing, technicians

The strategies you might like include:

- practical work
- project work
- working towards
- self-evaluation
- experimenting
- deduction/inferencing

- **Learner type 4: the dynamic learner**

You need to know what can be done with things. You learn by trial-and-error and self-discovery. You like variety and excel in situations calling for flexibility. You tend to take risks, are at ease with people and sometimes can be pushy. You often reach accurate conclusions in the absence of logical justification.

Strength: action, carrying out plans

Goal: to make things happen, to bring action to concepts

Favourite question: What can this become?

Careers: marketing, sales

The strategies you prefer may include:

- concrete project work
- setting short-term targets
- interacting with tutors and peers
- physical activities
- variety of learning environments and activities
- independent work

- Are you a **visual**, **auditory** or **tactile** learner?

Visual Learners: (You have to see it to believe it)

Auditory Learners: (If you hear it, you remember it.)

Tactile Learners: (If you can touch it with your hands, you will remember it.)

- MBTI Inventory: **Myers-Briggs Type Indicator**

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is not per se a learning style inventory. What it attempts to measure and identify is a person's "type", in this case, a psychological or personality profile based on Carl Jung's typology of conscious functioning (archetypes). Jung set up three poles to which Myers and Briggs added a fourth:

Introversion - Extraversion

Thinking - Feeling

Intuition - Sensing

Judging – Perceiving

- **The Index of Learning Styles**

The Index of Learning Styles is an instrument used to assess preferences on four dimensions (active/reflective, sensing/intuitive, visual/verbal, and sequential/global) of a learning style model formulated by Richard M. Felder and Linda K. Silverman. The instrument is being developed by Barbara A. Soloman and Richard M. Felder of North Carolina State University.

What type of learner am I?

You will have probably realised that you do not fit neatly into one particular category. You are more likely to have strong tendencies and preferences rather than being a typical activist or analytic learner.

In order to help you to build up your own profile write down about ten short statements that express the way you feel you learn best.

e.g. *I like working in groups. I like discussing ideas.*

How can I maximise my learning?

Once you are aware of your own preferences you can work at adapting the course presentation or content to suit your own learning styles. The following are some examples taken from The Study Skills Handbook published by Macmillan (Cottrell: 54)

Example 1

If you prefer to work with others, organise a study group, or arrange to work with a friend. Work in libraries and get involved in student activities.

Example 2

If you like to work to your own agenda, focus on time management so that your time feels like your own. Look for articles that nobody else is likely to use. Find examples that others might not think of.

Example 3

If you prefer to work by ear, tape lectures and read extracts from books onto tape, listen to them on the bus, record your own ideas onto tape, form a support group so that you can learn through discussion.

Last but not least!

Don't forget to use your awareness of your learning style to make a conscious effort to work at **developing the skills that do not come naturally to you.**

All web addresses in this leaflet were correct at the time of publication.

The information in this leaflet can be made available in an alternative format on request from Sue Hodgson, telephone 01482 466199.