

Name: _____

Date: _____

Success Center

Directed Learning Activity

Learning Styles

SS001.

Directed Learning Activity – Understanding Your Learning Style

Description: *In this Directed Learning Activity (DLA), you will explore the concept of learning styles and how they can potentially inform and affect your study habits and scholastic success.*

Materials: *To complete this DLA, you will need a computer with internet access.*

Step One: What Are Learning Styles?

stu·dent <noun>

*\ 'stü-dənt *

1: scholar, learner; especially one who attends a school

2: one who studies: an attentive and systematic observer <a student of politics>

Being a student is a complex process, which involves much more than simply paying tuition and attending classes. In fact, being a student is likely to be one of the most challenging jobs we will ever have in our lives...and we don't even get paid for it. How's that for irony? Of course, any teacher worth their red pen will tell you that the true reward of scholarship, an education, far exceeds any amount of monetary compensation one might be able to acquire from any mere wage-earning occupation.

One of the ways we can accelerate the process of scholarship (learning) is to understand what type of learner we are and how our minds comprehend and assimilate information. This is known as our **learning style**.

Take a few moments to think about classes you have taken in the past. What is one class you were truly interested in? Now, what was one class you absolutely hated? Compare and contrast these learning experiences. Write a few lines describing these two different classes, and try to explain what it was specifically about them that made them enjoyable or terrible. Did you find the information itself easy or difficult to comprehend? Was it easy or difficult to pay attention? Was the information presented in a way by the professor (no need to name names) that did or did not capture your attention?

A determining factor to whether or not a class “works” for you or not, whether you excel or fall behind, is your learning style. While we can't eliminate “undesirable” classes from our lives, we can make them more tolerable by understanding our learning style.

Just like there are many ways to teach one type of information (think about all the different teachers you've had and how differently each one of them taught), there are also various ways to comprehend that information. How this is best accomplished depends on the individual student. All sorts of different factors come into play that determine what type of learner we are: things like brain chemistry, genetics, upbringing, and social environment can have an effect on how we interpret and absorb information. However, understanding why we all learn differently may be less important for our purposes than understanding what these different styles are and how we can use that understanding to improve our study habits.

Step Two: What Are the Differences Between Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic Learners?

In this DLA, we will explore three learning styles: **visual**, **auditory**, and **kinesthetic**. Next to the bullet points below are statements that tend to be true of visual learners, auditory learners, and kinesthetic learners.

Visual learners tend to:

- take numerous detailed notes;
- tend to sit in the front;
- often close their eyes to visualize or remember something;
- find something to watch if they are bored;
- like to see what they are learning;
- benefit from illustrations and presentations that use color;
- are attracted to written or spoken language rich in imagery; and
- find passive surroundings ideal for learning.

Auditory learners tend to:

- sit where they can hear – but not necessarily see – what is happening in the front of the classroom;
- hum or talk to themselves or others when bored;
- acquire knowledge by reading aloud; and
- remember by verbalizing lessons to themselves (if they don't, they have difficulty reading maps or diagrams or handling conceptual assignments like mathematics).

Kinesthetic learners tend to:

- need to be active;
- take frequent breaks;
- speak with their hands (through gestures);
- remember what was done, but have difficulty recalling what was seen or heard;
- find reasons to tinker or move when bored;
- rely on what they can directly experience or perform;
- gravitate toward activities such as cooking, construction, engineering, and art, which help them perceive and learn;
- enjoy field trips and tasks that involve manipulating materials;

- sit near the door or someplace else where they can easily get up and move around; and
- be uncomfortable in classrooms where they lack opportunities for hands-on experience

In all likelihood, you are a combination of these styles; however one style is probably more dominant for you.

Step Three: An Assessment – “What’s Your Learning Style?”

Sit down in front of a computer in the Success Center, open an internet browser, and type in the following URL:

<http://www.personal.psu.edu/bxb11/LSI/LSI.htm>

Taking this short, informal test will likely help you to understand what style of learner you are.

After considering the test results and the definitions above, explain what kind of learning style you have. Are you a combination of styles? How might you attempt to alter your study habits now that you understand your learning style?

Step Four: A Self-Assessment – “What Are Your Study Habits?”

Whatever learning styles we have, there are also commonalities that most effective students share – study habits that all of us can cultivate in order to become better, more efficient learners.

Time

Regardless of our learning styles allowing ourselves enough **time** to thoroughly comprehend and absorb information is always important. Managing our time and prioritizing our commitments are habits we must commit to if we want to learn. The 10 minutes before class

starts is not enough time to read critically, and the night before an essay is due is not the time to outline thoughtfully. To make the process of learning easier on ourselves, we need to start early.

Patience

Learning is a slow process. Whether it's learning how to write an effective thesis statement, or mastering the steps necessary to solve a quadratic equation, we must have **patience** with ourselves. Don't be surprised – or get frustrated – if it takes awhile to understand new concepts. In his book *Outliers*, author Malcolm Gladwell argues that it takes 10,000 hours of practice at anything before we truly master it. So, we really shouldn't beat ourselves up if we can't compose perfect essays after taking only five or six shots at it.

Effort

If degrees from institutions of higher learning were easy to earn, literally everyone would have them. Not everyone does, however, because they require a great deal of effort. First and foremost, school is work. Headaches, boredom, sleep deprivation, and a plethora of other frustrations and annoyances may rear their ugly heads along the path to graduation. It's easy to be enthusiastic about school in the beginning of the semester, but when the work becomes more challenging mid-semester, it's important to remember why you're in class and keep applying the same level of effort, interest, and enthusiasm as you showed on the first day of class.

Think about the study habits discussed above and consider which of these is an area where you would like to improve. Are you a procrastinator? Do you tend to become frustrated with yourself? How might you improve in these areas?

PRINT STUDENT NAME

STUDENT #

Tutor Feedback:

_____ In Step One, the student analyzed their past learning experiences and identified aspects of classes that made them more challenging or less challenging.

_____ In Step Three, the student used the results of the online assessment, as well as the definitions provided in Step Two, to describe his or her own learning style and to articulate any changes he or she might make in his or her study habits.

_____ In Step Four, the student completed a self-assessment of his or her study habits and formulated a plan for improving in the areas of time, patience, and/or effort.

Additional Comments:

PRINT INSTRUCTOR/TUTOR NAME

DATE

INSTRUCTOR/TUTOR SIGNATURE

STUDENT – DO NOT FORGET TO TURN THIS SHEET IN AT THE FRONT DESK!

You may not get credit for completing this DLA if you fail to leave this sheet with the front desk receptionist.