



LEARNING STYLES

SUMMARIZED BY GERARD O'DEA BASED ON AN ORIGINAL COMPILATION
OF RESEARCH BY ERWIN VAN BEEK.



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Why Learning Styles Are Important:

"How much individuals learn has more to do with whether the educational experience is geared toward their particular style of learning than whether or not they are "smart."

In fact, educators should not ask, "Is this student smart?" but rather "**How** is this student smart?"

Different individuals have a tendency to both perceive and process information differently.

This has a huge impact on **How** a S.P.E.A.R. System or PDR Coach should be thinking about session design and delivery!

A basic tenet of this "learning styles" approach is that while all our bodily senses and thinking processes work well together, it is almost certain that each individual relies on some senses more than others for their learning. In fact, these "learning styles" may be best understood as "ways we prefer to learn things" instead.

Theories on Learning Styles:

Kolb said that we learn by following a cycle of 4 processes:

Feeling (the concrete experience, practical tips)

Watching (observing and reflecting on the problems at hand)

Thinking (conceptualising ideas and abstracting them, understanding theory)

Doing (experimenting and actioning new information, having a go at the new skill)

A person might start at any point in this cycle, but they usually proceed through them all if they are really to "learn" any new skill. The four phases involve the whole brain (left and right sides) and therefore contribute to more complete learning.

This also implies that the learner might prefer to:

- **Feel and Watch**
- **Watch and Think**
- **Think and Do**
- **Do and Feel**

...their way through the material you are presenting, at different points of the learning process.

Perceptual Channels: The Fundamental Learning Styles

Auditory Learners learn through listening...

These learners learn best through verbal lectures, discussions, talking things through and listening to what others have to say. Auditory learners interpret the underlying meanings of speech through listening to tone of voice, pitch, speed and other nuances. Written information may have little meaning until it is heard. These learners often benefit from reading text aloud and using a tape recorder.

Tactile/Kinesthetic Learners learn through moving, doing and touching...

Tactile/Kinesthetic persons learn best through a hands-on approach, actively exploring the physical world around them. They may find it hard to sit still for long periods and may become distracted by their need for activity and exploration.

Visual Learners learn through seeing...

These learners need to see the teacher's body language and facial expression to fully understand the content of a lesson. They tend to prefer sitting at the front of the classroom to avoid visual obstructions (e.g. people's heads). They may think in pictures and learn best from visual displays including: diagrams, illustrated text books, overhead transparencies, videos, flipcharts and hand-outs. During a lecture or classroom discussion, visual learners often prefer to take detailed notes to absorb the information.

The Three Perceptual Channels



AUDITORY
Spoken words, sounds...
what is **heard** and **said**



KINESTHETIC
Emotions, actions,
movement, taste, smell...
what is **felt**



VISUAL
Printed materials, facial
expressions, body language...
what is **seen**

Honey & Mumford and the Characters You Get In Your Sessions.....

Honey and Mumford (1992), two British psychologists developed a very popular Learning Styles Questionnaire, which categorized people by their preferred learning styles into:

ACTIVISTS: who involve themselves fully and without bias in new learning experiences. They are open-minded, not skeptical, they tend to act first and consider the consequences afterwards...

REFLECTORS: who like to stand back and ponder experiences and observe them from many different perspectives. They collect data and prefer to think about it thoroughly before coming to any conclusions...

THEORISTS: who adapt and integrate observations into complex but logically sound theories. They think problems through in a vertical, step-by-step, logical way...

PRAGMATISTS: who are keen to try out ideas, theories and techniques to see if they work in practice. They positively search out new ideas and take the first opportunity to experiment with applications. They tend to be impatient with ruminating and open-ended discussions.

(Honey & Mumford, 1992)



activist



reflector



theorist



pragmatist

Putting Learning Styles into Practice when teaching S.P.E.A.R. System and Personal Defense Readiness classes...

Remember the 5 Ds!

Describe
Demo
Dissect
Drill
Debrief

As you plan a session, you now need to consider whether you are addressing, as best you can, the different potential learning styles of your audience.

So, what presentations, discussions, activities or tasks can you incorporate into your training to involve and engage your audience?

Visual

Use of video-clips (Jim Carrey, Terry Tate and others). Of course, Physical **Demonstrations** also engage people visually.

Auditory

Provide careful **Descriptions** and explanations, discussions of learning points during the **Dissection** and the **Debrief**. Careful injection of stories and cases which illustrate key points with words and metaphor. Think about all of Coach Blauer's stories from the audio series 'Cerebral Self Defence', which in itself is a great source of audio material for your sessions.

Kinesthetic

Drills, accurate **Demonstration** and **Dissection** of physical exercises, referencing body parts, using motion words and by moving your body, gesturing appropriately while you deliver the content.

Activist

The Activist likes open-loop exercises, both physical and classroom-based which allow them to engage physically in learning, or through challenges where they can use their physicality and test their ability to make decisions. S.P.E.A.R. System drills all engage this person well.

Reflector

The Reflector likes Pre-drill Q&A during the Demo & Dissect phase of the 5 Ds which allow them to Think, Answer and Discuss the learning points. They enjoy Demonstration, Explanation, Feedback and Debrief opportunities.

Theorist

The Theorist likes story-based explanations which enrich and enliven the practical nature of the drills or information. Sometimes resources which allow them to Read, Listen or engage in learning by forming associations between theory and practice can be beneficial, too.

Pragmatist

The Pragmatist likes case-study and scenario-based explanations of 'why' technical points are important, including technical POIs and technical feedback on performance, linking practice to theory in a real-world and immediate way.

Some Links for Further Study:

http://www.funderstanding.com/learning_styles.cfm

<http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/styles.html>

<http://www.nwlink.com/~Donclark/hrd/styles/kolb.html>

<http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/hrd/styles/gardner.html>

<http://www.infed.org/thinkers/gardner.htm>

<http://www.ldpride.net/learningstyles.MI.htm>

<http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/perform/coach.html>

<http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/coach.html>

<http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/docs/midcareer/g6module1.html>

Books at Amazon.Com:

David Kolb

[Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development](#)

Howard Gardner

[Frames Of Mind: The Theory Of Multiple Intelligences](#)