

Experts in education have come to agree that there are four main learning styles: Visual, Auditory, Reading/Writing, Kinesthetic (active). Most of us are a blend of all of them (multimodal), but, we do have our preferences and tendencies.

Having insight into how you learn best can be helpful in a number of ways:

- Provides a starting point for how to best go about learning a new skill or continuing to build your knowledge both at work and in other areas of your life.
- Help you choose the best format (e.g. In-Class/Classroom, Virtual Classroom, Independent Study, etc.) for courses and seminars offered by educational bodies like the Insurance Institute.
- Assists you in articulating to others (i.e. managers, co-workers, direct reports) how you best process and understand information they are sharing with you; this is a two-way street... you may also want to come to understand the preferences of those you work with.
- Generates awareness of how your learning preferences play a part in communication, teamwork, and your on-going career development.

Below is an activity that will help you get a better sense of, or confirm your understanding about, how you learn best.

Determine your learning style

Take a moment to really reflect on the options presented and select the one that sounds the most like you. This is a normed and standardized assessment. It may feel uncomfortable, odd, or even difficult to make only one choice - this is likely because you have learned to apply and adapt to multiple modes of learning. That being said, you likely have a preference.

1. You are helping someone who wants to go to the airport, the center of town or the railway station. You would:

- go with her.
- tell her the directions.
- write down the directions.
- draw, or show her a map, or give her a map.

2. A website has a video showing you how to make a complex graph. There is a person speaking, some lists and words describing what to do and some diagrams. You would learn most from:

- seeing the diagrams.
- listening.
- reading the words.
- watching the actions.

3. You are planning a vacation for a group. You want some feedback from them about the plan. You would:

- a) describe some of the highlights they will experience.
- b) use a map to show them the places you will visit.
- c) give them a copy of the printed itinerary.
- d) phone, text or email them.

4. You are going to cook something for family and friends that you have not made before. You would:

- a) cook something you know without the need for instructions.
- b) ask friends for suggestions.
- c) look on the Internet or in some cookbooks for ideas from the pictures.
- d) use a good recipe.

5. A group of tourists want to learn about the parks or wildlife reserves in your area. You would:

- a) talk about, or arrange a talk for them about parks or wildlife reserves.
- b) show them maps and internet pictures.
- c) take them to a park or wildlife reserve and walk with them.
- d) give them a book or pamphlets about the parks or wildlife reserves.

6. You are about to purchase a new mobile phone. You are considering three options and want to make sure you find the right one for you. Other than price, what would most influence your decision?

- a) trying or testing it.
- b) reading the details or checking its features online.
- c) it is a modern design and looks good.
- d) the salesperson telling me about its features.

7. Remember a time when you learned how to do something new. Try to avoid choosing a physical skill, e.g. riding a bike. You learned best by:

- a) watching a demonstration.
- b) listening to somebody explaining it and asking questions.
- c) diagrams, maps, and charts - visual clues.
- d) written instructions – e.g. a manual or book.

8. You have a problem with your heart. You would prefer that the doctor:

- a) gave you something to read to explain what was wrong.
- b) used a plastic model to show what was wrong.
- c) described what was wrong.
- d) showed you a diagram of what was wrong.

9. You want to learn a new program, skill or game on a computer. You would:

- a) read the written instructions in the 'Help' section or seek out the information on-line.
- b) talk with people who know about the program.
- c) try things to figure out the controls and functionality using the mouse or keyboard.
- d) follow diagrams/charts in the instructions that came with it or are available on-line.

10. I like websites that have:

- a) things I can click on, shift or try.
- b) interesting design and visual features.
- c) interesting written descriptions, lists and explanations.
- d) audio channels where I can hear music, radio programs or interviews.

11. Other than price, what would most influence your decision to buy a new non-fiction book to read?

- a) the way it looks is appealing.
- b) quickly reading parts of it.
- c) a friend talks about it and recommends it.
- d) it has real-life stories, experiences and examples.

12. You are trying to figure out how to take a photo using your new smartphone. You would like to have:

- a) a chance to ask someone questions and talk about the camera feature(s) available on your phone.
- b) clear written instructions with lists and bullet points about what to do.
- c) diagrams showing you the your phone and how to best take a picture using its built-in camera(s).
- d) examples of good photos and poor photos with tips given to you on how to improve them.

13. Do you prefer a teacher or a presenter who uses:

- a) demonstrations, models or practical sessions.
- b) question and answer, talk, group discussion, or guest speakers.
- c) handouts, books, or readings.
- d) diagrams, charts or graphs.

14. You have just finished a peak period/implemented a major project at work and would like some feedback. You would like to have feedback from your manager:

- a) using examples from what you have done.
- b) using a written description of your results.
- c) verbally with an opportunity to talk things through in detail.
- d) using graphs/infographics showing what you had achieved.

15. You are going to order food at a restaurant or cafe that you have been to before. You would:

- a) choose something that you have had there before.
- b) listen to the waiter or ask friends to recommend choices.
- c) choose from the descriptions in the menu.
- d) look at what others are eating or look at pictures of each dish.

16. You have been asked to present at a senior management meeting. In building your presentation you would:

- a) make diagrams or get graphs to help explain things.
- b) write a few key words and practice saying your presentation over and over.
- c) write out your presentation and learn from reading it over several times.
- d) gather many examples and stories to make the talk real and practical.

Determine your score

Use the following scoring chart to find the learning style that your answers for each question corresponds to. Circle the letter that corresponds to your answer. For example: If you answered B for Question 3, circle V in the Question 3 row.

Scoring Chart

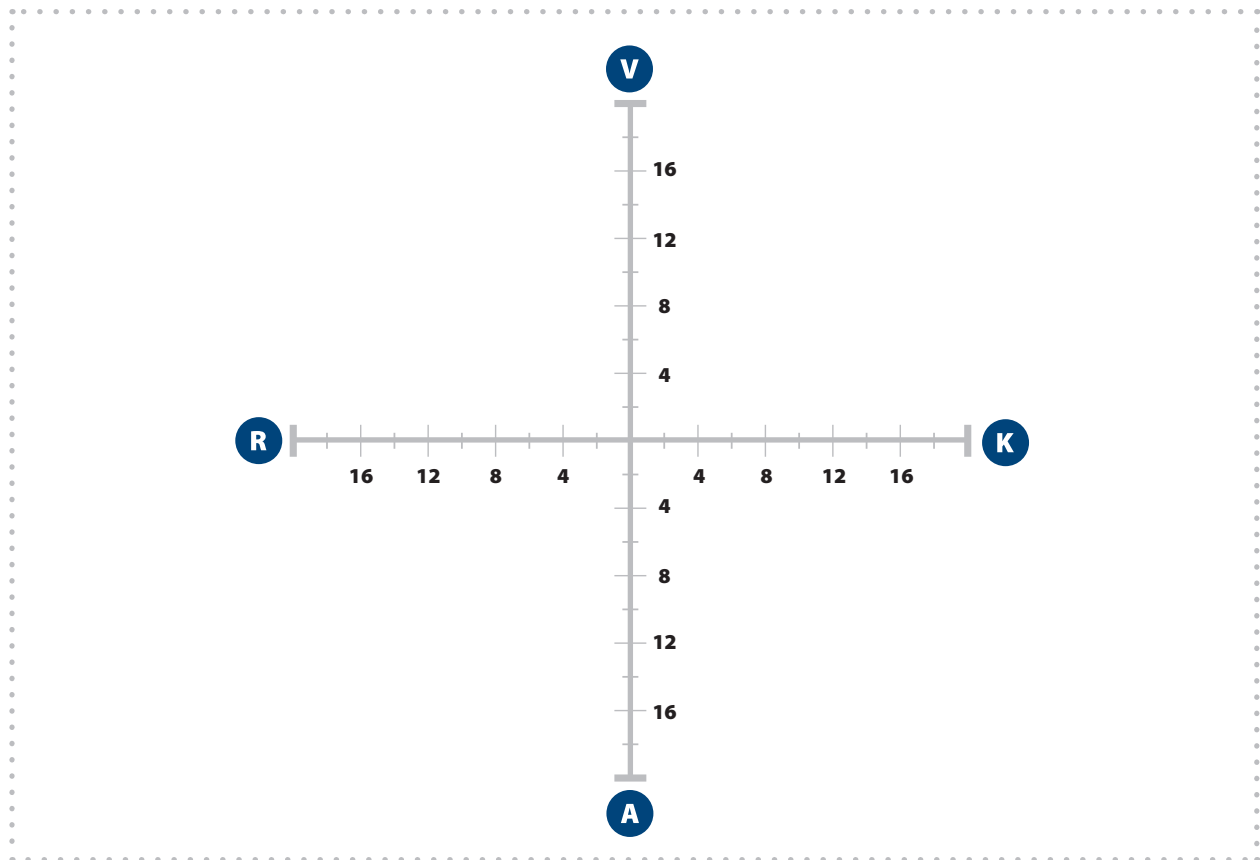
Question	Answer A	Answer B	Answer C	Answer D
1	K	A	R	V
2	V	A	R	K
3	K	V	R	A
4	K	A	V	R
5	A	V	K	R
6	K	R	V	A
7	K	A	V	R
8	R	K	A	V
9	R	A	K	V
10	K	V	R	A
11	V	R	A	K
12	A	R	V	K
13	K	A	R	V
14	K	R	A	V
15	K	A	R	V
16	V	A	R	K

Count the number of V(usual), A(uditory), R(eading/Writing), and K(inesthetic)s you have:

Calculating your scores: Visual Auditory Reading/Writing Kinesthetic

Plot your totals

Plot your totals (using a dot) on the corresponding axis on the chart below and each dot. Which learning preference is your most dominant? Least dominant? What might this suggest about how you learn and process information?



If you find that there is not much variance in your learning preferences, it means you are a multimodal learner. Multimodal learners often find that they can learn regardless of how the material/information is presented to them. We are all capable of multimodal learning to some degree, but are at our best when our learning preferences are taken into account.

What is your learning style?

Here are some best practices, language to talk about, strategies to accommodate, and approaches to working with each of the learning preference types:



Visual

Keywords:

- different formats
- space
- graphs
- charts
- diagrams
- pictures
- physical
- maps
- plans

When learning or being given information:

You prefer information in the form of gestures, using highly descriptive language, pictures, videos, posters, slides, flowcharts, printed copies, and concrete examples

You may find it useful to use underlining, different colours, and highlighting when taking notes or working through information in a textbook, e-mail, or report.

You may find drawing a diagram or making visual connections (e.g. mindmapping) a useful tool in helping you piece together information.

When trying to recall information, i.e. who said what in a meeting or what was referenced on p. 3 of a report, you might find it helpful to redraw the arrangement of the room or the page being talked about.

You likely learn best in In-Class/Classroom or Virtual Classroom settings.

Characteristics:

You want the whole picture – so, you are probably more holistic in your approach. You prefer not to deal in piece meal if it can be avoided.

You may be swayed by the visual presentation/look for something.

You are interested in colour, layout, and design; you have a strong sense of spatial awareness and where you 'fit' in an overall visual depiction of a space, organization, hierarchy, etc.

In a meeting, you are likely the one who is going to draw something to help capture or synthesize information. It may be helpful to redraw the arrangement of the room or a diagram to support a point being talked about to help you recall what was said at a later date.



Auditory

Key words:

- listening
- discussing
- talking
- questioning
- recalling

When learning or being given information:

You prefer that information is spoken or heard.

You may find it useful to ask questions and interact with others to process and synthesize information.

You may also find it helpful to teach/share newly acquired information to others to help cement it in your own mind.

You are likely to learn best in an In-Class/Classroom or Virtual Classroom setting.

Characteristics:

You prefer to have information or new tasks explained to you; and, to have the opportunity to ask questions to build and solidify your understanding.

You prefer to engage in discussion vs. thinking in isolation.

In a meeting you are the most likely to ask a question or share newly acquired knowledge. It may be helpful to redraw the arrangement of the room.



Reading/Writing

Keywords:

- lists
- notes
- text in all its formats whether in print or online

When learning or being given information:

You prefer to take detailed notes to refer back to later – visuals are often translated into written items; i.e. you note/write about the trends the graph/chart shows vs. just referencing the graph/chart.

You would prefer to have something to read and learn from in advance of discussion or a class (handouts, textbook, website, etc.).

Handouts, copies of presentations, job aids, and reference materials are extremely helpful to the learning process.

You can likely learn well by distance education/self-paced learning or in situations where there is a textbook/handout/website to review in advance of a session or class.

Characteristics:

You derive meaning from words; talk is okay, but seeing it written down/reading a handout is even better; analysis and discussion is easiest when you have something to read/refer to vs. just hearing the discussion or seeing an image.

You are resourceful and usually highly skilled at finding information you do not know quickly through research (books, articles, on-line resources).

In a meeting you are often the one making lists, taking minutes or adding notes to handouts to help you recall/remember key points.



Kinesthetic

Keywords:

- senses
- practical exercises
- examples
- cases
- trial and error

When learning or being given information:

You prefer to apply the information being shared with you in a concrete way as quickly as possible – e.g. roleplaying, experimenting with the concepts being taught, working through a scenario question/problem, etc.

It may be helpful to draw parallels between the new knowledge/skills you are acquiring and previous experiences or information you acquired; relationships and making relevant connections are key.

You learn best when it is a sensory experience – consider making up a song, writing on brightly coloured paper, taking note of the feel/touch of your surroundings, etc. This will help you to stimulate the senses and make things more tactile/concrete.

You likely prefer to learn in In-Class/Classroom settings.

Characteristics:

You need to 'experience' something in order to fully understand it.

You prefer to experiment and learn by trial and error versus having a detailed 'how to' explanation.

Ideas are only 'valuable' if they sound practical, real, and relevant.

In a meeting, you are most likely the one itching to get out of there and just 'try it'. **How does your learning preference influence or impact your work? What about your interactions with your manager/co-workers/direct reports?**