

Resources for Michigan's Literacy Volunteers



Learning Styles

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USING LEARNING STYLES TO ENHANCE YOUR TUTORING



Using Learning Styles to Enhance Your Tutoring

Discovering and using learning styles is a key to being a successful tutor. Like everything else about your students, their learning style is uniquely their own, different from anyone else's. *Learning styles are a characteristic and preferred way of learning.* Another way to look at learning styles is to think of it as the conditions under which an individual finds it easiest and most pleasant to learn.

Learning styles are primarily visual, auditory, or kinesthetic (tactile). *Visual learners* prefer to learn by reading or watching. *Auditory learners* like to learn by listening. *Kinesthetic learners* learn by doing, by touching or manipulating objects, or by using their hands.

Although students can learn to adapt to learning styles that are not their preferred ones, most people have difficulty at first when asked to do something that seems unnatural to them. The most successful tutors are those who can present material in a variety of ways using a combination of teaching methods in order to reach the diverse learning styles of their students.

Visual Learners

- Visual learners learn best by seeing information.
- Visual learners often have poor auditory skills and weak verbal abilities.
- Visual learners often have difficulty blending sounds and discriminating short vowel sounds.
- Visual learners are often poor spellers
- Visual learners easily remember information presented in pictures, charts, or diagrams.
- Visual learners can make "movies in their minds" of information they are reading. Their movies are often vivid and detailed.
- Visual learners often pay close attention to the body language of others (facial expressions, eyes, stance, etc.) Be aware of your body language and use it to emphasize important points you wish to make during class.
- Use videos and overheads as part of your lectures.

- Visual learners may tune out spoken directions.

Tutoring Strategies for Visual Learners

1. Use overhead transparencies
2. Use flash cards for key concepts
3. Allow time for student to write down notes
4. Use as many visuals as possible: pictures, diagrams, charts, etc.
5. Use demonstrations whenever possible
6. Write out all key phrases, words, terms, etc.
7. Create outlines for lessons, leaving blanks for student to complete
8. Encourage student to chart out information using maps, diagrams, etc.
9. Have student copy problems and examples
10. Present lesson objective at the beginning of lesson and summary at the end
11. Provide additional worksheets for later practice and reinforcement
12. Write on blackboard when presenting key concepts, etc.

Auditory Learners

- Auditory learners learn best by hearing information. They can usually remember information more accurately when it has been explained to them orally.
- Auditory learners can remember quite accurately details of information they hear during conversations or lectures. (Don't be annoyed if the student isn't taking notes from your lectures)
- Auditory learners have strong language skills, which include a well-developed vocabulary and an appreciation for words.
- Strong language skills often lead to strong oral communication skills. They are usually talented at giving speeches, oral reports, and articulating their ideas.
- Auditory learners may find learning a foreign language to be relatively easy. They also may have musical talents.
- Auditory learners tend to have poor visual skills, so graphs, maps and charts may present a challenge to the auditory learner. They do best with oral directions and assignments.

- Auditory learners often reverse words, for example: from, for, form and was, saw
- Auditory learners tend to have poor handwriting and small motor skills.

Tutoring Strategies for Auditory Learners

1. Always present material orally
2. Encourage discussion
3. Use a tape recorder to tape session for student review
4. Have student read aloud
5. Ask for oral response to oral questions
6. Ask student to repeat directions, key concepts, etc.
7. Ask student to summarize main points
8. Try to maintain eye contact
9. Encourage student to think out loud
10. Vary the tone and intensity of your voice
11. Plan sessions that are organized in sequential order
12. Give directions orally with only two or three steps at a time
13. Have taped materials available for reference
14. Encourage student to speak answers aloud before writing

Kinesthetic or Tactile Learners

- Kinesthetic learners learn best by moving their bodies, activating their large or small muscles as they learn. They are "hands-on learners" or "doers" who actually concentrate better and learn more easily when movement is involved.
- Kinesthetic learners often wiggle, tap their feet or move their legs when they sit. Many were labeled "hyperactive" as children.
- Kinesthetic learners work well with their hands. They may be good at art, sculpting, working with various tools, learning in lab situations or learning by computer.

- Kinesthetic learners need to take notes and highlight important information. They are using their small muscles to remember information.
- Kinesthetic learners need information broken into steps; like a systematic process: step 1, step 2, and step 3. They can remember historical dates, mathematical equations, and scientific information if it is presented in a sequential manner.
- Kinesthetic learners may have difficulty learning abstract symbols like letters and numbers.

Tutoring Strategies for Kinesthetic or Tactile Learners

1. Have student try out a problem on a chalkboard or lab center
2. Encourage student to make their own flashcards
3. Give demonstrations while allowing student to perform, step by step
4. Plan ways for the student to manipulate the materials
5. Use concrete examples to help the student use the skills gained
6. Involve the student in the planning of the tutoring session
7. Use computer assisted programs, so students can type and move mouse
8. Use association techniques to link new learning with past experiences
9. Allow student to stand, move, etc. during session

Suggested Aids that Address Learning Styles

Visual Auditory Kinesthetic/Tactile

Guided imagery
 Color codes
 Study cards
 Photographic pictures
 Film and television
 Charts and graphs
 Maps
 Demonstrations
 Drawings
 Tapes/CDs

Film and television
Music
Verbal directions
Rhymes/poems
Reading aloud
Repeating things orally
Rhythmic sounds
Having discussions
Sounding out words
Saying words in syllables
Having student pace or walk during lessons
Items to “play with” like koosh ball, play-dough
Having student physically “act out” a lesson
Role playing
Having student trace a word with their finger
Having student take notes
Giving student breaks to get up, stretch, etc.

Barsch Learning Styles Explanations

Learning Style	Clues	Learning Tips
Visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs to see it to know it. • Strong sense of color. • May have artistic ability. • Difficulty with spoken directions. • May be easily distracted by sounds. • Trouble following lectures. • Misinterpretation of spoken words. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use graphics to reinforce. • Color coding to organize notes and possessions. • Written directions. • Use of flow charts and diagrams for note-taking. • Visualize spelling of words of facts to be memorized.
Auditory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefers to get information by listening-needs to hear it or speak it to know it. • Written directions more difficult to follow than spoken directions. • Prefers listening to reading and writing. • Inability to read body language and facial expression. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of tapes for reading and for class lecture notes. • Learning by interviewing or by participating in discussions. • Works well in study groups. • Having test questions or directions read aloud or put on tape.
Kinesthetic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefers hands-on learning. • Can assemble parts without reading directions. • Difficulty sitting still. • Learns better when physical activity is involved. • May be very well coordinated and have athletic ability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiential learning (making models,, doing lab work, and role playing). • Frequent breaks in study periods. • Tracing letters and words to learn spelling and to remember facts. • Use computer to reinforce learning through sense of touch. • Memorize or drilling while walking or exercising. • Usually involves some kind of movement while learning, i.e. tapping pencil, shaking foot, and/or holding something.

Barsch Learning Style Inventory

Place a check on the appropriate line after each statement.

	Often	Sometimes	Seldom
1. Can remember more about a subject through listening than reading.			
2. Follow written directions better than oral directions.			
3. Like to write things down or take notes for visual review.			
4. Bear down extremely hard when writing.			
5. Require explanations of graphs, diagrams, or visual directions.			
6. Enjoy working with tools.			
7. Are skillful and enjoy developing and making graphs and charts.			
8. Can tell if sounds match when presented with pairs of sounds.			
9. Remember best if writing things down several times.			
10. Can understand and follow directions of maps.			
11. Do better at academic subjects by listening to tapes and lectures.			
12. Play with coins or keys in pockets.			
13. Learn to spell better by repeating the letters out loud than by writing the word on paper.			
14. Can better understand a news article by reading the paper than by listening to the radio.			
15. Chew gum, snack, or smoke during studies.			
16. Feel the best way to remember is to picture it in your head.			
17. Learn spelling by "finger spelling" the words.			
18. Would rather listen to a good lecture or speech than read about the same material in a book.			
19. Are good at working and solving jigsaw puzzles.			
20. Grip objects in your hands during learning periods.			
21. Prefer listening to the new on the radio than reading about it in the newspaper.			
22. Obtain information on an interesting subject by reading related materials.			
23. Feel very comfortable touching others; hugging, handshaking, etc.			
24. Follow oral directions better than written ones.			

Scoring the Learning Style Inventory

Often = 5 points
Sometimes = 3 points
Seldom = 1 point

Place the point value on the line next to its corresponding item number. Next, sum the values to obtain your preference scores under each heading. The highest score indicates your learning style preference. The lowest score indicates your learning style weakness.

VISUAL	AUDITORY	KINESTHETIC/TACTILE
2. ____	1. __	4. ____
3. ____	5. ____	6. ____
7. ____	8. __	9. ____
10. ____	11. ____	12. ____
14. ____	13. ____	15. ____
16. ____	18. ____	17. ____
20. ____	21. ____	19. ____
22. ____	24. ____	23. ____
VPS Total _____	APS Total _____	TPS Total _____

If you are a VISUAL LEARNER, that is, you have a high visual score, then by all means be sure you see all study materials. Use charts, maps, filmstrips, notes and flashcards. Practice visualizing or picturing spelling words, for example, in your head. Write out everything for frequent and quick visual review. It is obvious you learn best when you SEE things... make it a point to see things.

If you are an AUDITORY LEARNER, that is, have auditory score, then be sure to use tapes. Sit in the front of the lecture hall or classroom where you can hear best and can review them frequently. Tape your class or lecture notes. After you read something, summarize it on tape or out loud. Verbally review spelling words, lectures or test material with a friend.

If you are a TACTUAL LEARNER, that is, have a high tactile score, trace words, for example, as you are saying them. Facts that must be learned should be written several times. Keep a supply of scratch paper just for that purpose. Taking and keeping lecture notes will be very important.

As a result of this learning inventory what do you think you can do to strengthen your learning? Give yourself some examples.