

# The Seven Learning Styles

by Stacy Mantle

How many ways are there to learn about a subject? According to the latest findings by several leading psychologists, there are seven specific types of learning styles. This means that in order to maximize learning advantages, you must define the type of learner that you have, and cater the lesson to that particular learning style. For example, if your student is primarily a linguistic learner, you could incorporate several novels into your curriculum. You could encourage short stories to explain scientific developments, or allow the student to rewrite a difficult math problem into a story problem. If he/she is primarily logical, you will want to emphasize charts, tables, and diagrams. Venn diagrams work well with a logical learner.

Read each description below to determine which style best describes your student. Remember that it is possible to have more than one style of learning, particularly in the intrapersonal and interpersonal categories (numbers six and seven), which have traditionally been interpreted as personality types.

1. Linguistic: This type of learner loves to read, write, and tell stories. They tend to memorize places, dates, names, and trivia very easily, and are always mesmerizing you with their incredible tales. They have a remarkable ability to repeat back everything you have ever told them, word for word. Encourage their creativity, and do your best to distinguish between the truth and exaggeration (it is all well intended). These students learn best by saying, hearing, and seeing words. Ask them to write down a word or a phrase, and it is forever locked into their memory. Encourage them to participate in spelling bees and creative writing courses. You could have another Shakespeare on your hands!

2. Logical: This student is very mathematically inclined. They enjoy solving problems, particularly if they are math related. They are similar to Dr. Spock, on Star Trek, in that they are very logical, straight-forward types of learners. They will plague you with questions on how things work, how things relate to one another, and why things are here. Their favorite toys as young children were likely building blocks, and pattern puzzles. Answer their ongoing questions with as much patience as you can muster, and know that one day they may likely become an engineer. This type of student learns best by categorizing, classifying, and working with abstract patterns or relationships. Ask them to make a chart or to show relationships between different items. For example, "What kind of effect does the El Nino have on the stock market?". They will not only come up with an answer, but they will be able to explain the process and developmental stages of the relationship.

3. Spatial: These are the visualizers. They spend most of the day dreaming, watching movies, and staying as far away from reality as possible. If they seem particularly "down", asking them to draw a picture will get you much further into the nature of the problem, than asking them to tell you about it. Allow them to develop their senses and their natural artistic abilities. They are very good at working with colors and pictures, and using the "mind's eye". Allow them to play a couple of educational computer games, such as Civilization or the Oregon Trail, or to daydream under a tree. They could be hard at work thinking about a particular problem, but have yet to put it on paper. These types of learners are very artistic, although they often have problems expressing it. Encourage any type of creative endeavor. They may become the next developer of an international theme park.

4. Musical: This type of learner is best at noticing details, pitches, and rhythms that escape the normal listener. They are excellent at keeping tune, and are adept at turning the abstract into concrete objects. They learn best through rhythm, melody, and music. For memorization techniques, ask them to write a song about the lesson (rap works well as a narrative), or teach them a song. Encourage their natural love of music, and try to incorporate music into as many lessons as possible.

5. Bodily: This type of learner is always on the move. They constantly walk around, they have to touch everything, and they use body language to convey their feelings. They would rather play sports or do a craft than sit down and read a book. They need active education! Keep them moving. Play word games in the pool, have spelling lessons during tennis. Take them camping to learn about geography and nature. These are the learners who can do more than one thing at a time. Generally recognized as ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), many are misdiagnosed. Allow them to use all of that extra energy to learn. Remember to incorporate sense development and interaction with space during their lessons. Attempt to keep the duration of each lesson down to a minimum (10-20 minutes depending on age), and change subjects frequently. Interdisciplinary lessons are very successful with these types of learners.

6. Interpersonal: These are the "social butterflies". They adapt easily to any type of social situation, have many friends and are excellent leaders. They are patient, understanding, and very empathetic, which makes them a favorite among their playmates. They generally make good leaders because of their ability to mediate conflict, and are often referred to as "the Peacemaker" of the family. Encourage their love of people, and allow them to be with many different types of people. They will likely bring home a number of different types of friends. Although this can be difficult at times, it is important to support and accept all of them. This type of learner will do best in a group situation as they compare, share, relate, and interview other people. If no group is available, don't be surprised to see them create one in their animals or toys!

7. Intrapersonal: These strong willed people work best alone. They pursue their one interests and have a deep understanding of themselves. They pride themselves on being independent and original, and they tend to stand out from the crowd without even trying. They are the "strong, silent type". They do best in self paced instruction, individualized projects, and working alone. Allow them to be by themselves, but continue to encourage their socialization skills. Create a number of situations for them to socialize, yet allow them to maintain their own space. These children work best alone, and often need to be encouraged to socialize.

In conclusion, we all have elements of each learning style. But the truth is that one or two types stand out in each of us. Determine which style of learner your child is, and figure out ways to incorporate that learning style into your teaching. Continue to encourage the student to figure out alternative styles, and teach them how to bring each type into their life.