

Field Sensitive Learning and Field Independent Learning

No two individuals learn exactly the same. Take the following quiz to explore your personal learning style. You will **NOT** have to submit this activity to your facilitator.

1. I learn best from:
 - a. details and facts
 - b. looking at the whole picture
2. When solving a problem, I rely on:
 - a. logic
 - b. my gut feelings
3. When I was in high school, I preferred:
 - a. Math
 - b. Art
4. When I take a class, I prefer it to be:
 - a. well planned and organized so that I know exactly what to do
 - b. loose and flexible so that there is an opportunity for change of direction, if necessary, as the class progresses
5. When I am reading or studying, I like to be in a room that:
 - a. is totally quiet
 - b. has background music
6. When I am learning a new language, I like to learn:
 - a. Grammar first and then stories
 - b. stories first and then grammar
7. I am comfortable with:
 - a. putting ideas into a logical order
 - b. showing the relationships among ideas
8. I like my daily routine to be:
 - a. organized
 - b. spontaneous

9. When I am reading I tend to look for:

- a. details and facts
- b. main ideas

10. When I meet new people I remember:

- a. their names more than their faces
- b. their faces more than their names

If you had more “A” responses you have strong field-dependent learning tendencies (also called linear, left-brain, or analytical).

If you had more “B” responses, you have strong field sensitive learning tendencies (also called field independent, global, right-brain, or rational learning).

Field Independent Learners

Field independent learners prefer to work independently. They enjoy a sense of competition. They are task-orientated and are not distracted by the social environment. Field independent learners are able to pull information from the total picture; they can focus on details and parts. They have a sequential and structured thinking style and are able to persist at mundane, non-stimulating tasks. They like to discover things on their own with a trial and error approach.

Field Sensitive Learners

Field sensitive learners are learners who like to work in groups to achieve a common goal. They like to help others and tend to be sensitive to the opinions, ideas and feelings of others. They look to the teacher for guidance and demonstration. They look at information as a part of the total picture and may have trouble recalling details. Field sensitive learners are able to improvise and “think on their feet”. They find materials that relate to personal interests easier to learn. These learners find it easy to memorize material that have been presented orally. They tend to be more task-orientated with activities that are non-academic. They tend to have a difficult time focusing on noninteractive task.

Field Independent Teachers

Field independent teachers are task oriented. They often use a formal lecture approach, followed by an explanation of the tasks. Rewards tend to be impersonal (stickers, checkmarks on a chart, etc.). Field independent teachers encourage competition and reward individual achievement. Facts and principles are highlighted and the teacher is often emotionally detached.

Field Sensitive Teachers

Field sensitive teachers are focused on the needs, feelings and interests of their students. They fill the role of consultant or supervisor. The teaching approach is informal, with the focus on class discussion. The teacher will often model what is expected in the assigned

tasks. The rewards are more personal (pats on back, specific verbal praise, etc.). Group achievement is encouraged, as can be seen in the many cooperative learning activities. Many of the lessons are *humanized* and narrated so that the students can personally relate to them. The field sensitive teacher identifies emotionally with the students in the class.

While we understand each student is unique and learns in his or her individual way, research has found the following trends:

- Field Independent Learning Style tend to be: American males, Asian males
- Field Sensitive Learning Style tend to be: African American males and females, American females, Hispanic males and females and Native American males and females. Neither style of teaching or learning is considered to be better than the other. Educators, however, do need to keep in mind the effectiveness in matching teaching styles with students' learning styles. Our goal as teachers is to become adept at utilizing both types of teaching and learning approaches in order to better reach and teach all students. It is best to think of these teaching and learning styles as complimenting, rather than competing with each other.

Learning Styles

Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic Learning

Most people have **visual**, **auditory**, or **kinesthetic** learning preferences. Those who tend to learn better when information is presented through the written word, diagrams, pictures, charts and films are **visual learners**. These learners take notes while reading and visualize that they are learning through pictures and graphs.

People who respond best to spoken word are **auditory learners**. For these learners, hearing new information is most effective. They enjoy seminars, lectures and presentations. Rather than writing down what they have heard, they prefer to explain and discuss the information with peers.

People who learn best through personal experience are called **kinesthetic learners**. These learners learn by “doing”. First hand experience is what this learner needs to truly learn new information.

Auditory and visuals learners may be best accommodated during field independent activities and kinesthetic learners may thrive during field sensitive classroom activities. Research has shown that the majority of ELLs, strongly prefer a more kinesthetic teaching approach and may find it more difficult to focus during a group lecture (Anderson & Adams, 1992). Educators who are aware of the learning style preferences within their classrooms are better equipped to meet the needs of their students. Activities that provide a combination of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning opportunities, will establish balance within your classroom. Our goal is to allow each of our students to experience success while being challenged to stretch their learning in new ways.

Multiple Intelligences

The theory of Multiple Intelligences was the brainchild of Howard Gardner, a Harvard University professor, researcher, and author. His proposed theory that all human beings possess various types of intelligences, is proving to change the landscape of American education. According to Gardner, every human possesses some degree of each of the following intelligences:

- Spatial Intelligence
- Verbal/Linguistic Intelligence
- Logical/Mathematical Intelligence
- Bodily/Kinesthetic Intelligence
- Musical/Rhythmic Intelligence
- Interpersonal Intelligence
- Intrapersonal Intelligence
- Naturalistic Intelligence

Read *Multiple Intelligences: A Theory for Everyone* about Howard Gardner and Multiple Intelligences. You can access this article in Unit 6 of our course web page at <http://www.quia.com/pages/browarddesoltraining/page6>.

It is important to remember that individuals are not limited to one learning style or intelligence type. According to Gardner, we each possess all of the intelligence proposed in the Multiple Intelligences theory. While individuals will vary in strengths and preferences, it is usually possible for a person to develop abilities in the other categories as well. Balance is the key to successful instructional delivery. The more we can incorporate activities that speak to our students' diverse learning styles and intelligences, the more we are meeting their needs.

Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning is a highly affective instructional strategy in which small teams of students with varying levels of ability, use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject. Each member of a team is responsible not only for their own learning but also for helping teammates learn, thus creating an atmosphere of collaboration as well as individual and group accountability. Students each have specific tasks and work through an assignment until all group members successfully understand and complete it. Research has shown that many English Language Learners experience success when working in cooperative learning groups. The atmosphere of partnership and cooperation give support to student achievement and learning life skills.

Cooperative learning activities include:

- Group reading activities
- Team debates and discussions
- Group presentations and projects
- Group writing assignments