

LEARNING STYLE

“When everything else fails, read the instructions.”

—Author Unknown

Pretend that you just got a new computer. What will you do to learn how to use it? Will you read the owner’s manual? Will you start pushing buttons to discover what happens? Will you ask an experienced computer user to explain to you how to use your computer? The strategy that you choose will most likely be influenced by how you learn best.

People rely heavily on three of the five senses to gather information: sight, sound, and touch. Most people receive information using all of these channels, but often one channel, or **learning style** is more effective than the others. When you read the first paragraph in this lesson, how did you imagine learning how to use a computer?

Consider the following information:

- Reading a manual suggests an ability to see and understand, or a preference for **visual** learning.
- Pushing buttons suggests an ability to learn by doing, or a preference for **kinesthetic** or **hands-on** learning.
- Listening to instructions suggests an ability to remember by hearing, or a preference for **auditory** learning.

Knowing your personal learning style can help you to accomplish learning tasks more effectively. For example, if you have trouble following a written list of instructions because you are a kinesthetic learner, you can ask someone to show you how to do the task. You will then be able to perform the task and read the instructions later to ensure that you haven’t left out any steps. When you begin a task with your preferred learning style, you set yourself up for success. When you follow up by reading the instructions, you work on strengthening your weaker learning style.

In some instances, you might find that you have to utilize a learning style that is not your own. For example, what is the best way to learn to ride a bicycle? Watching someone ride a bike? Listening to someone tell you how to ride? Or trying to ride it yourself? For this particular learning task, riding the bike yourself is probably the best way to learn. If you are a kinesthetic learner, you will find this task easy to do. If you are a visual learner or an auditory learner, you will have to work harder at this task in order to succeed.

CHARACTERISTICS OF LEARNING STYLES

VISUAL LEARNERS

- observe rather than talk or act
- are quiet by nature
- are organized in their approach to tasks
- use advanced planning
- are meticulous and neat in appearance
- like to read
- are usually good spellers
- see pictures or words in their heads when they need to recall information
- are generally not easily distracted
- find verbal instructions difficult
- have good handwriting
- doodle
- remember faces
- notice details

AUDITORY LEARNERS

- enjoy talking
- are outgoing by nature
- talk or whisper to themselves
- like to be read to
- enjoy listening activities
- enjoy music
- often hum or sing
- have difficulty with written directions
- memorize by organizing steps into a sequence
- remember voices
- are easily distracted by noise

KINESTHETIC LEARNERS

- use their hands while talking
- like to touch people when talking to them
- are outgoing by nature
- enjoy handling objects
- like physical activities
- are in motion most of the time
- tap their pencil or their foot while studying
- often do not enjoy reading
- are poor spellers
- like to solve problems by physically working through them
- will try new things
- express emotions through physical means
- dress for comfort

A FINAL LEARNING TIP

You can predict a teacher's learning style by watching how he or she teaches. If you have a teacher that matches your learning style, you will probably do better in his or her class.

Once you understand your learning style, you can use your strengths to help you learn. When you are confident using your learning style, you can incorporate other ways of learning. This will make you more flexible as a learner.

7. a) Complete the Learning Style Self-Assessment Survey on the following page, then score your results.
- b) Based on the survey you just completed, answer the following questions in a paragraph in your notebook:
- Were the results as you expected them to be?
 - Think of a situation where you understood something quickly and easily. Explain why you think you grasped the information so easily.
8. Answer the following questions:
- a) Describe one advantage and one disadvantage of your particular learning style.
- b) What is the most effective way for you to demonstrate to someone that you have learned something?
- c) What two careers do you believe would be most appropriate for people with your learning style? Explain your answer.
9. Describe a learning situation that is difficult for you. Suggest one or two ways that you can use your learning style to succeed. For example, if you are an auditory learner and you are taking a course that has a reading or writing focus, you could read the material into a tape recorder and play it back to listen to it.

There are Suggested Answers to Support Questions at the end of this unit.

LEARNING STYLE SELF-ASSESSMENT SURVEY

Read each statement and circle the answer that **best** applies to you.

1. You usually remember more from a class lecture when:
 - a) you do not take notes but listen very closely
 - b) you sit near the front of the room and watch the speaker
 - c) you take notes (whether or not you look at them again)
2. You usually solve problems by:
 - a) talking to yourself or a friend
 - b) using an organized, systematic approach with lists and schedules
 - c) walking, pacing, or some other physical activity
3. You remember phone numbers (when you can't write them down) by:
 - a) repeating the numbers orally
 - b) visualizing the numbers in your mind
 - c) writing the numbers with your finger on a table or wall
4. You find it easiest to learn something new by:
 - a) listening to someone explain how to do it
 - b) watching a demonstration of how to do it
 - c) trying it yourself
5. You remember most clearly from a movie:
 - a) background noises, music, and what the characters said
 - b) the setting, scenery, and costumes
 - c) the feelings you experienced during the movie

6. When you go to the grocery store, you:
 - a) silently or orally repeat the grocery list
 - b) walk up and down the aisles to see what you need
 - c) usually remember what you need by visualizing the list you left at home

7. You are trying to remember an event and so you:
 - a) hear in your mind what was said or the noises that occurred
 - b) see the event in your mind
 - c) remember the way the event made you feel

8. You learn a foreign language best by:
 - a) listening to tapes or CDs
 - b) writing the words or filling out pages in workbooks
 - c) attending a class in which you read and write

9. You are confused about the correct spelling of a word so you:
 - a) sound it out
 - b) try to see the word in your mind
 - c) write the word several different ways and choose the one that looks right

10. You enjoy reading most when you can read:
 - a) dialogue between characters
 - b) descriptive passages that allow you to create mental pictures
 - c) stories with lots of action in the beginning (because you have trouble sitting still)

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11. You usually remember people you have met by their:
- a) names (you forget their faces)
 - b) faces (you forget their names)
 - c) mannerisms and motions
12. You are distracted most by:
- a) noises
 - b) people
 - c) the environment (temperature, comfort of furniture, and so on)
13. You usually dress:
- a) fairly well (but clothes are not very important to you)
 - b) neatly (in a particular style)
 - c) comfortably (so you can move easily)
14. You can't do anything physical and you can't read, so you choose to:
- a) talk with a friend
 - b) watch TV or look out a window
 - c) move slightly in your chair or bed

Count the number of statements you answer a) to, and record this in the scoring chart. Do the same for b) and c).

Scoring Chart
a) ____ auditory learner (learn best by hearing)
b) ____ visual learner (learn best by seeing)
c) ____ kinesthetic learner (learn best by moving, touching, doing)

If you would like to try another learning style survey, and you have access to the Internet, there is an online questionnaire at:

http://www.careerccc.org/english/canada_prospects_98-99/career_curiosity/4.html

LEARNING SKILLS

Writing, or expressing yourself with written words, is a learned skill. Some people write easily and others find it difficult, regardless of their learning style. To make the writing process easier, it helps to separate it into two steps: composing and editing.

Composing, or **free writing**, is the creative, right-brain part of the writing process that entails putting thoughts on paper. When you compose, you simply record anything and everything that comes to mind, **as it comes to mind**. You do not evaluate your thoughts, organize them into a sequence, look up references, or even puzzle over the spelling of a word. You focus on keeping your pen moving while you transfer your thoughts onto paper. When you have finished composing, you can read what you have written. You do not evaluate your writing at this stage—you just look for opportunities to add more thoughts.

The editing process takes place when you feel you have included everything you want to say. Editing is the organizing, left-brain part of the writing process. It involves evaluating your thoughts by deciding if you will include or exclude them in your next draft. It also involves checking facts and focusing on details like spelling, grammar, and the order in which you present your ideas.

When you separate right-brain writing tasks from left-brain writing tasks, the writing process becomes more manageable. Give it try!

GOAL SETTING

"You can eat an elephant if you eat it bit by bit."

—African Proverb

In Key Question 5, you will write about the kind of life that you want to have in the future. In Lesson 2, you listed your priorities—things that are important to you. These activities were designed to lay a foundation for setting goals.

SHORT-TERM GOALS AND LONG-TERM GOALS

There are two kinds of goals: short-term goals and long-term goals. Most people can manage daily or weekly tasks, or short-term goals. However, for many people, long-term goals—like deciding what you will do with your life—are frightening because they seem impossible to achieve. To make a long-term goal more manageable, it helps to break it down into smaller tasks. As you work at the smaller tasks you will get closer to achieving your overall goal.

GETTING HELP

While planning your long-term goals, talk to people who have travelled the road that you wish to travel. More than likely, there are people in your community, such as parents, friends, and neighbours, who are living and doing exactly what you want to do. Ask them how they got to where they are now. If they cannot offer the help you are seeking, ask them to suggest someone who can.

DEFINING YOUR GOALS

You have a much greater chance of achieving a goal if you define it in a **specific** manner. The **SMART** method can help you to do just that. SMART is an acronym for:

- S** Specific Be clear. What do you want? What will you do to get it?
- M** Measurable How will you know you have achieved it?
- A** Achievable Do you have the attitudes, skills, and knowledge you need to achieve your goal?
- R** Realistic Is it anchored in reality? Can you do it?
- T** Timed Have you set a deadline? When will you achieve you goal?

Using the SMART method, a general goal such as “I want to read more often” can be stated more specifically as, “I will read one book every month. By this time next year, I will have read twelve books.” SMART goals follow this basic formula:

By _____ (date), I will _____ (specific action). I will measure my success by _____ (specific measure).

DEALING WITH OBSTACLES

Sometimes, circumstances will get in the way of what you want to achieve. In order to deal with these obstacles, identify the problem, and if your learning style requires it, write it down. Then, ask yourself these critical questions:

- Is this a legitimate problem?
- Have I invented this problem in order to avoid having to work toward my long-term goal?

A legitimate problem is not having enough money to go to college. An invented problem is thinking that you are not smart enough to go to college. It is important to determine if your problem is legitimate, so you are not in danger of operating on a false assumption.

If you have determined that the problem is legitimate, your next step is to explore possible solutions. You may require the assistance of a friend or a family member. Once you have explored all your options, pick one that is best for you and continue on your way to achieving your goals.

Your attitude is important in achieving your goals. Do your best to think positively. There will always be obstacles that get in your way. With the right attitude, a little creativity, and some support, you can overcome them.



SUPPORT QUESTION

(Do not send for evaluation.)

10. Read the goals on the following page. The goals are organized into three categories: Personal and Interpersonal, Learning-Related, and Career-Related. Decide whether each goal is a SMART goal or a general goal. If it is a SMART goal, write SMART in the space beneath the statement. If it is a general goal, rewrite the goal using the SMART method.

There are Suggested Answers to Support Questions at the end of this unit.

SMART GOALS

PERSONAL AND INTERPERSONAL GOALS

I would like to...
... pay attention when other people are talking.
... stop wasting time on unimportant tasks.
... learn how to write more neatly.
... be more organized.

LEARNING-RELATED GOALS

I would like to...
... achieve a 70% average in math.
... hand in my assignments on time.
... pass the advanced first-aid course.
... improve my typing skills.

CAREER-RELATED GOALS

I would like to...
... learn about five careers that interest me each year, so that when it is time for me to make decisions about my postsecondary education, I will know what course of study to pursue.
... work with my computer and see how I like it.
... put together a résumé.
... try lots of activities—such as cooking, travelling, and, acting—to get ideas about my career options.

KEY POINTS IN GOAL SETTING

Goal setting:

- ensures that you (and those around you) are clear about where you are going
- should be recorded so that you can visualize your goals
- helps you to talk about what you are doing and how you will do it
- allows you to set a time frame and map out a plan of action
- serves to focus your attention and motivate you
- lets you know when you have achieved your goal, and when a reward is in order

KEY QUESTIONS

Answer the key questions and save your answers in your Course Journal or e-Journal.

5. While completing the following writing activity, do your best to separate the composing step from the editing step in order to make the writing process easier.
 - a) Set your watch or a timer for five minutes. Write about what you want your life to be like in twenty years. Describe the different aspects of that life: family, work, leisure, home, lifestyle, and friends. Write everything that comes to mind as quickly as you can. When the time is up, finish the last sentence and put your pen down. You may be surprised with the ideas that came into your mind!
 - b) Read what you have written. Add and delete ideas, as you like.
 - c) Use a different colour pen or pencil to edit your writing. Evaluate your thoughts. Organize them so that they flow logically. Check for errors in spelling and grammar. When you have edited your piece, write or type a good copy.

6. In previous assignments, you reflected on your priorities and your hopes for the future. You identified your personality type, your thinking style, and your learning style. One of the steps in developing your Annual Education Plan (AEP) is to identify your goals for this school year. You are required to define at least one goal in each of the three categories:
 - Personal and Interpersonal Goals
 - Learning-Related Goals
 - Career-Related Goals

Using the Student Planning Sheet that follows, identify one goal for each category, then write the goal using the SMART method. For example, your sheet might look like this:

Specific	I want to be on time for work.
Measurable	I will stick a foil star on the calendar for each day that I arrive to work on time.
Attainable	Yes. The tools I need to accomplish this goal are easily available. For example, I can set an alarm clock to help me get up on time.
Realistic	Yes. I believe I can reach this goal. I have given myself enough time to build the habit of being on time.
Timed	I will accomplish this goal by February 1 st .

When you have completed the sheet, tear it out and staple it into your Course Journal or scan it into your e-Journal.

STUDENT PLANNING SHEET

Identify one goal for each category, then write the goal using the SMART method. The questions for each category should help you to identify and define your goals.

PERSONAL AND INTERPERSONAL GOALS

What do I do well?

What do I want to improve about myself?

How will I do this?

In what ways do I want to improve my relationships with other people?

What teamwork opportunities do I want to volunteer for?

What community involvement opportunities are available that I might benefit from?

S
M
A
R
T

LEARNING-RELATED GOALS

What marks do I want to get in my subjects?

What will I have to do to get these marks?

What do I want to learn from other activities (sports, hobbies, other activities)?

How can I accomplish that learning?

If I have a part-time job, what skills am I learning there?

What do I want to know about educational possibilities (for example, choice of courses, work experience opportunities, colleges, apprenticeship training programs)?

S
M
A
R
T

CAREER-RELATED GOALS

What career/work possibilities do I want to know about (for example, career fairs, economic sectors, occupations, jobs)?

S
M
A
R
T

EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR KEY QUESTION 5

Your writing will be evaluated using the criteria in the rubric below. Level 1 is considered a pass. Level 3 is the provincial standard.

Category	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Content	Few details are provided. Ideas are stated with little clarity.	Some details are provided. Ideas are stated with some clarity.	Sufficient details are provided. Ideas are stated with overall clarity.	Comprehensive details are provided. Ideas are stated with precision.
Organization (biography)	Ideas are scattered and disjointed.	Ideas are loosely connected.	Ideas are presented logically and sequentially.	Ideas are presented logically, sequentially, and in a sophisticated manner.
Editing	Writing has many spelling and grammar errors.	Writing has some spelling and grammar errors.	Writing has few spelling and grammar errors.	Writing has no spelling and grammar errors.

EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR KEY QUESTION 6

Your goals will be evaluated using the criteria in the rubric below. Level 1 is considered a pass. Level 3 is the provincial standard.

Category	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Content	Goals are stated with little clarity.	Goals are stated with some clarity.	Goals are stated with overall clarity.	Goals are stated with precision.
Knowledge and application	Demonstrates limited knowledge of SMART method.	Demonstrates some knowledge of SMART method.	Demonstrates adequate knowledge of SMART method.	Demonstrates comprehensive knowledge of SMART method.