



DOES YOUR CHILD'S LEARNING STYLE ***REALLY MATTER?***

White Paper

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There is a lot of debate about the validity of learning styles.

On one side, you have researchers like Harold E. Pashler, professor of psychology at the University of California at San Diego, who states that teaching to a child's specific learning style does not have an impact on academic success. Instead, he propounds in his paper, *Learning Styles: Concepts and Evidence*, that it is the responsibility of teachers to design their instruction to match the content they are teaching. According to his theory, the content itself defines the learning style that would be best used to present it. Pashler believes that method of presentation would benefit all learners equally.

He bases this argument on his assertion that the many different studies on learning style did not use "experimental designs that had the potential to provide decisive evidence;" indeed, they "lack the kind of experimental evidence you would expect for a drug."

Pashler's opponents point out that understanding a child's learning style—and taking action—enables students to succeed much more effectively. It is a study that does not demand the same experimental caution as one uses to approve a drug that will alter the composition of our bodies and, therefore, could pose significant danger to our health.

In fact, there have been hundreds of studies on learning styles, and the link between academic success and teaching according to a child's preferred learning style. Their validity is reinforced because they all point to the same conclusion.

Students who are strongly oriented towards "analytical," "creative," or "practical" intelligence did better if they were taught by instructors who matched their strength, a conclusion outlined in Robert J. Sternberg's study, *The Theory of Successful Intelligence*.

In fact, studies show that when both students and teachers know their learning styles and teach accordingly, students:

- score higher on tests.
- have better attitudes.
- are more efficient with their time.
- retain information longer.
- experience less frustration, even with more difficult subjects.

Why the Brain Loves PRADA:

When we design teaching around the incredible workings of the brain, we develop learners who are excited about learning, curious to find out more and ready to take on new challenges.

And a student's learning style plays into the PRADA learning formula.

So, yes, learning styles really do matter. They matter in how we communicate and teach. They matter in how well our students can retain information. And, they matter for making learning relevant, easy-to-understand, and fun for our students.

Ready to see the benefits of teaching according to learning style? **Read on!**



PROCESS. Learning that targets the pre-frontal cortex. A student's ability to process and understand information starts here. When we design instruction around a student's learning style (how they best process information) we open the doors for higher level thinking skills and an increased ability to transfer information into long term memory.

RELEVANT. Learning that is relevant and activates the part of the brain that determines focus. By making the content relevant to where a student is mentally, we help the student connect the dots and retain that concept for future reference.

ACESSIBLE. Learning that is accessible and encourages kids to want to learn. When we can remove common struggles by appealing to a child's preferred learning style, we remove the heightened emotion that often makes learning difficult.

DYNAMIC. Learning that is dynamic and helps kids develop a love for learning. Making learning fun encourages kids to continue asking questions and dig deeper.

ACHIEVEMENT. The PRADA formula leads to achievement which is the best motivator. When students see success, they are more likely to develop as lifelong learners who are ready to take on new challenges.

GUIDE TO LEARNING STYLES

BY BRIDGEWAY HOMESCHOOL ACADEMY

Every child learns differently, and excels when provided with instruction that meets their learning style head-on. Because learning styles also affect day-to-day interactions, the following guide is designed to provide insights on how to interact, as well as the best ways to present new material.



The Visual Learner

Visual learners learn best by seeing and observe every little facial expression you make, to figure out how you are responding to them. If you have visual learners in your home, be very aware that you send messages, both positive and negative, with your body language and every facial expression. Your inflective eyes or smile is recognized as approval of what they are doing, and encourages them to continue. Conversely, a frown, however slight, often sends a message

that you are disappointed. If that happens, acknowledge the feelings, and talk it out.

By the same token, you can easily read the facial expressions of your visual learners to figure out how they are responding to what you are teaching. Is it all sinking in, or do they still look confused?

If you are not a visual learner, and your child is, you will need to deliberately send visual messages through facial expressions.

You also need to deliberately study their facial expressions to see how they are reacting or feeling. Pictures, videos, TV, and people watching are important to them and a good way to teach new concepts. However, visual images may also interrupt concentration. HINT: Be aware of visual overload, because this can become a barrier to learning.

Hannah is an extremely visual learner. A bit of a perfectionist, Hannah always sets the bar high for herself. As a young child she often complained that, "Abby is making angry faces at me," or "Amanda wrinkled her face at me." Facial expressions could be extremely motivating or extremely discouraging, and they affected more than just interactions at home and academics. In fact, we learned to be careful when she was on the field because she would look to us after a play and determine whether she had succeeded or not based on the look on our face. All too often we would be discussing something completely unrelated to the game and unwittingly send a message to her that she was not measuring up.



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Visual learners learn by observing, and are, therefore, able to recall what they see in quite an uncanny way. They are often sight readers who prefer written instructions because they retain what they read so well. You may often find that they enjoy watching a video to learn, or that they often disappear to pick up a book and read.

Visual learners enjoy working with the following:

- computer graphics
- maps, graphs, charts
- cartoons
- posters
- diagrams
- graphic organizers
- text with a lot of pictures

Give your visual learners freedom to draw pictures in the margins or learn by looking at the graphics and reading the text that explains the graphics.

Visual learners naturally tend to envision the topic or play a movie in their thoughts regarding the material. Ideally, allow them to act out the subject matter, create a visual that details the material, or watch a video that reinforces what they are learning.

WHAT TO AVOID

Be careful of too much visual stimulation. A textbook page or worksheet with too much variety can be a huge distraction for a visual learner who tends to try to take it in all at once. Walls filled with graphics, posters, pictures, quotes, etc., are too distracting for most visual learners whose interest in observing and reflecting on what they see can take their attention away from what you are trying to teach.





The Auditory Learner

Auditory learners are very sensitive to your voice tone and inflections.

- If your voice is too firm or you raise the pitch, they may assume (or sense) you are angry or frustrated with them.
- If your tone is not quite sincere, they will recognize it, so be sure your praise is genuine and deserved.
- If you repeatedly correct them or tell them what to do, they may feel like you are nagging and “turn you off.”

Think of your auditory learners as having a tape recorder in their head. They hear what you said over and over, even after the lesson is over. In fact, something you might have thought they didn't understand “replays” for them, and they'll often “get it” with a bit more time.

Auditory learners do not have to look at you to understand what you are saying. They even hear you mutter or speak in the adjoining room! If you're visual, it may bother you that they don't look at you when you're speaking. But remember, you need that; they don't.

It's OK to explain to them that you understand they learn best by hearing but you learn best by seeing, so they can help by looking at you and responding. Because more people are visual learners than auditory learners, it's a good social skill for them to learn to look at people when they speak.

Abby is an auditory learner who has an amazing ability to remember what she hears. As a young child, she could be doing somersaults and calisthenics, or even sing to herself while listening to a read-aloud book, and still answer every question presented about the story. But she is also easily distracted and annoyed by the sounds around her. We learned to give her a set of headphones and even some music as she studies difficult subjects. This seems to keep her focus even when the academics are difficult.



ACADEMICS

Students with this style are able to recall what they hear and prefer oral instructions. They learn by listening and speaking. These students also enjoy talking and interviewing. They are phonetic readers who enjoy oral reading, choral reading, and listening to recorded books.

Auditory students learn best by doing the following:

- interviewing, debating
- participating on a panel
- giving oral reports
- participating in oral discussions of written material

Auditory learners retain information better when they hear their own voice, so encourage them to read aloud or talk through what they are learning. They can also try to develop an internal conversation between themselves and the text.

Lessons on tape recorders and other equipment that requires wearing headphones is especially good for them. Noises can distract them from concentrating, so if you have an auditory learner who struggles, grab some headphones to block out unwanted sounds.

WHAT TO AVOID

Auditory learners can easily lose focus when there is too much conversation around them. Provide quiet places for them to study and avoid allowing siblings to interrupt as you work with them one-on-one. For many auditory learner, tapping noises, chewing, scraping, etc., can also be very distracting and often create tension. Be aware of their response and ready to move them to a place where they can escape those noises.





The Kinesthetic Learner

Kinesthetic learners tend to be constantly moving some part of their body. Some are whole-body wigglers; others just move a leg, foot, or other extremity in what appears to be a nervous twitch; still others need to run, jump, and engage in whole-body movement. Many are touchers and want to be close to another person, whether that person wants it or not.

They'll drum their fingers, rock, often switch positions in a chair, and have trouble being attentive. They get tired of being told to sit or stand still. As a result, your lessons need to provide the opportunity to touch, wiggle, and be active.

Provide opportunities for sensory input throughout the day. A bracelet to fiddle with, a textured pencil wrap, a wiggle seat, and even a stress ball can provide outlets for kinesthetic learners when they are feeling the need to move. Let your kinesthetic learners know you understand they learn best when able to move, but help them find ways to wiggle without losing the ability to pay attention to their lessons.

Let them know you will try teaching them in the way they learn best, but that you also want them to practice listening without wiggling or touching, because it's a good social skill to learn. For kinesthetic learners, their learning style is their distraction!

Caleb is a Kinesthetic learner who loves to move and get his hands dirty. Ever since he was young, he has had a special interest in science and can often be found taking apart a radio or other electronic equipment just to see 'how and why it works.' He wants to understand concepts and loves a good challenge, but it seems impossible and overwhelming to just look at a textbook. He gets extremely frustrated when asked to sit still multiple times and has more difficulty understanding concepts if he is focusing on not moving. We learned to let him draw or build something during lessons so that he can keep his hands busy and focus on the task at hand.



ACADEMICS

Kinesthetic learners learn best by touching and manipulating objects. They need to involve their whole body in learning and will remember material best if they act it out.

These students learn best by:

- drawing.
- playing games that involve their whole body.
- movement activities.
- making models or dioramas.
- following instructions to make something.
- setting up experiments.

Allow them to take an active part in your lessons. If you're giving a lesson on paper, give them a pencil or crayon to doodle or write with as they listen.

Give them specific directions, such as underlining the vowel as you say the words or putting the whiskers on the cat. If they need to listen, give them something they can hold and feel while listening.

When they read, allow them to use a pencil or highlighter to mark passages that are meaningful. It is also a good idea to have them hold the book in their hands rather than place it on a table. Even walking around as they read can provide additional stimulation.

Having kinesthetic learners take notes while listening gives them an action to do while learning. To take the action farther, have them transfer the information into a journal, into the margins of their books, or onto a computer. It is also OK for these students to draw whatever comes to mind as they read.

The ideal approach to learning for kinesthetic learners is to get busy—both mentally and physically.



⊘ WHAT TO AVOID

Kinesthetic Learners need the opportunity to move in order to learn. In addition, their brains are better prepared to learn when they have had the opportunity to spend some time in exercise or body movement. Avoid scheduling too much seat time all at once and taking away break times as a method of discipline.

Summary of Learning Preferences

Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic (Tactile)

The detailed explanations above are essential to understanding your child's learning preferences. However, the chart below is designed for those visual learners who prefer to see information in a diagram, chart, or list.

	Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic
	The visual learner needs to see, observe, record, and write.	The auditory learner needs to talk and to listen.	The tactile-kinesthetic learner needs to do, touch, be physically involved.
Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagram • Chart • List 	Listen and respond to information	Needs structured, hands-on activity, such as building a replica of the Houses of Parliament, or using a salting process to feel the corrosion of metals
Meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through imagined visualization • Interpretive illustration 	Dialogue and discuss	Needs to be involved with "doing" activities, such as acting out an event
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading • Through written description 	Hear lecture and debate	Needs to touch what is being considered, such as holding and examining a model, visiting a factory, or making a product
Possibilities	Through written brainstorming, such as webbing or mind-mapping	Talk out ideas, interests, problems, possibilities	Needs to immerse in the trial and error of experimentation, such as designing and making a new product

Teaching according to Learning Style brings out the genius inside your child. To find out your whole family's learning style take our Learning Style assessment today!

Just visit LearningStyles.me to get started.