



## Understanding Learning Styles

Once your child has entered school and the learning process becomes more structured, you should be able to determine the method by which he or she learns. These methods are called "learning styles", and they will be an important part of the learning process for your child. The three primary learning styles are visual, auditory, and tactile. Many children use a combination of these to learn. Others learn best by using just one, and, without that method, things just don't make sense to them. That's why it is important for the child and the parent to understand what learning styles are all about.

**Visual learners** learn by reading or seeing pictures. They understand and remember things by sight. They can picture what they are learning in their head, and they learn best by using methods that are primarily visual. They like to SEE what they are learning.

Visual learners are usually neat and clean, they often close their eyes to visualize or remember something, and they will find something to watch if they become bored. They often have difficulty with spoken directions, and may be easily distracted by sounds. They are attracted to color, and to spoken language (like stories) that is rich in imagery.

If your child is a visual learner, here are some things you can do to support the learning process:

- Have your child sit near the front of the classroom.
- Have your child's eyesight checked on a regular basis.
- Use flashcards to learn new words.
- Help your child visualize things being heard or read.
- Write down key words, ideas, or instructions.
- Draw pictures to help explain new concepts, and have them explain the pictures.
- Color code things.
- Avoid distractions during study times.
- Remember that your child needs to see things, not just hear things, to learn.

**Auditory learners** learn by hearing and listening. They understand and remember things they have heard. They store information by the way it SOUNDS, and they prefer listening over reading and writing. They often learn by reading out loud because they have to hear it or speak it in order to know it.

Auditory learners often hum or talk to themselves or others if they become bored. They sometimes seem as though they are not paying attention, even though they may be hearing and understanding everything that is being said.

If your child is an auditory learner, here are some things you can do to support the learning process:

- Be sure your child sits where he or she can hear.
- Have your child's hearing checked on a regular basis.
- Use flashcards to learn new words, but read them out loud.
- Read stories, assignments, or directions out loud.
- Tape record your child practicing spelling words and let them listen to the tape.

- Have test questions read out loud.
- Have your child study by reading things out loud.
- Remember that your child does not have to be looking at you to learn from you.

**Tactile learners** learn by touching and doing. They understand and remember things through physical movement. They are "hands-on" learners who prefer to touch, move, build, or draw what they learn, and they tend to learn better when some type of physical activity is involved. They need to be active and take frequent breaks, they often speak with their hands and with gestures, and they have difficulty sitting still.

Tactile learners like to take things apart and put things together, and they tend to find reasons to tinker or move when they become bored. They may be very well coordinated and have good athletic ability. They can easily remember things that were done, but might have difficulty remembering what they saw or heard in the process. They often communicate by touching, and they appreciate physically expressed forms of encouragement, such as a pat on the back.

If your child is a tactile learner, here are some things you can do to support the learning process:

- Provide opportunities that involve touching, building, moving, or drawing.
- Use lots of hands-on activities like art projects, taking walks, or acting out stories.
- Let your child chew gum, walk around, or rock while reading or studying.
- Use flashcards and arrange them in groups to show relationships between ideas.
- Have your child trace words to learn spelling (finger spelling).
- Allow and encourage frequent breaks during reading or studying periods.
- Allow them to tap a pencil, shake their foot, or hold something while learning.
- Use a computer to reinforce learning through the sense of touch.
- Remember that your child is not being fidgety just to avoid learning.

As you can see, there are different ways in which children learn and many different strategies you can use to help them along the way. It is important to keep in mind that learning styles begin to develop at a very early age, and that many children have a combination of learning styles. That's why it is important that you be involved from the start.

Perhaps you recognize some of the character traits or behavior patterns described here and can already identify your child's learning style. Once you understand the ways in which people learn, you are well on your way to helping your child build a solid foundation for a lifetime of learning.

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