

How To Make the Most of the Way You Learn



You just got a new computer program. You and two friends are ready to install it. But each of you wants to approach the task in a different way. "Let's read the directions," says one friend. "Why do that?" you ask. "My neighbor just installed this program. Let's call him and ask him to talk us through it."

Your other friend already has the program out of the wrapping and in the computer. "Let's just get started," he says. "We'll figure it out as we go along."

Who's right? Any of these methods would work. But your different approaches to solving this problem reflect the different ways people learn.

Knowing how you learn can really help you in school. Once you understand how you learn best, you can make the most of your study time, learn more quickly and master material more easily.

Know how you learn

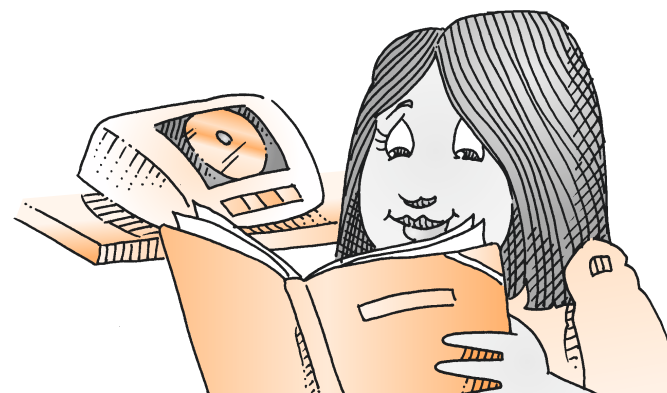
Researchers now know that people learn in different ways. And while most of us *can* learn in a variety of ways, we often have one way that works best for us. Here are some questions to help you think about how *you* learn:

- **Do you usually read** the written instructions before starting a project?
 - **Are you the one** who reads the map when you're in the car?
 - **Do you have to sit** where you can see the teacher in class?
 - **Do you need to write** the directions down or draw a map when someone tries to give you directions to her house?
- If you answered *yes* to these questions, you're probably a **visual learner**.



- **Do you like** to take things apart to see how they work?
- **Do your hobbies include** hands-on things like building models or working on crafts?
- **Do you have trouble** sitting still because you're very active?
- **Are you likely** to say, "I'd rather figure it out myself," when someone tries to explain something to you?

If you answered *yes* to these questions, you're probably a **kinesthetic (hands-on) learner**.



- **Do you learn** best when your teacher explains something?
- **Do you find** it easier to *tell* someone something than to write it down?
- **Do you usually study** best if you can play soft music in the background?
- **Do you like** to have someone quiz you out loud before a test?

If you answered *yes* to these questions, you're probably an **auditory learner**.

There's no one "best" way to learn. But once you know your learning style, you can make the most of it when you're studying.

How To Make the Most of The Way You Learn



If you're a visual learner

You learn best by seeing and imagining. Studying will be easier if you concentrate on how things *look*.

- **Look at your teachers** when they talk.
- **Organize your assignments** by writing them down. Make checklists. Put self-stick notes on books you need to take home.
- **Use color-coding.** Buy a red notebook, folder and book cover for math, for example.
- **Make flash cards.**
- **Use your imagination.** Think of how a historical event might have looked.
- **Pay special attention** to pictures and illustrations. When it is time for the test, “seeing” the illustration in your mind’s eye may help you remember the information on the page.
- **Write things** to be memorized on charts and put them where you’ll see them. Use time lines to learn history.



If you're a kinesthetic learner

You learn best by doing. It’s easiest for you to remember the things that use your body and your sense of touch.

- **Move around** while you’re studying. Try standing up while you’re reading. Take a walk while you recite your math facts.
- **Give your hands** something to fiddle with when you have to sit still, like a smooth rock or a tennis ball. Your mind can concentrate better if your body is busy.
- **Physically organize** your homework. Make a pile of things to do. Put the most important stuff on top.
- **Act it out.** Pretend you’re at the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Walk around and “sign” the document yourself.
- **Practice spelling** words with magnetic letters or Scrabble® tiles.
- **Use objects** to understand concepts. If you’re learning about magnetism, experiment with a magnet yourself.
- **Do hands-on work** when you can. If your teacher gives you a choice, you might build a model of the Globe Theater for your Shakespeare unit rather than writing a research paper.

If you're an auditory learner

You learn best by hearing. It’s easiest for you to remember the things you *hear*.

- **Make up songs,** poems or raps about the facts you need to remember. For example, “Columbus sailed the ocean blue in fourteen hundred and ninety-two.”
- **Listen to audio books.**
- **Say things out loud** to memorize them. Recite spelling words and math facts. Once you’ve studied the causes of the Civil War, tell your mom (or your brother or your parakeet) what you learned.
- **“Write” the first draft** of your paper by saying it into an audio recorder. Then transcribe what you’ve said.
- **Ask your teachers** if you can bring a small audio recorder to class. Repeat assignments into the recorder. Or talk with your friends about your homework and repeat out loud what you need to do.



Most people learn in several different ways. But once you know how you learn best, you'll have a head start on learning things for the rest of your life.