

POINTS OF DEPARTURE

Imagine that you have an important test tomorrow in, for example, the history of English as a global language (see p.000). You are very keen to do well in this test. How would you prepare for it? Sit in groups of three or four and discuss this. How different were your preparations?

How Do You Learn Best?

There are many different ways of learning, and we all have a preferred learning style, although we may not be aware of it. The questionnaire below aims to find out something about your learning preferences.

Each question gives you a situation involving giving or receiving information. You are given a number of strategies to choose between. Choose the strategy which you prefer. You can choose more than one if you feel that gives a better reflection of your preferences. You can also leave out a question if you feel none of the suggested strategies are relevant.

- 1 You are about to give directions to a person who is standing with you. She is staying in a local hotel and wants to visit your house later. She has a rental car. Would you:
 - a. draw a map on paper?
 - b. tell her the directions?
 - c. write down the directions (without a map)?
 - d. meet her at the hotel in your car?
- 2 You are not sure whether a word should be spelled 'dependent' or 'dependant'. Do you:
 - a. look it up in the dictionary?
 - b. see the word in your mind and choose by the way it looks?
 - c. sound it out in your mind?
 - d. write both versions down on paper and choose one?
- 3 You have just received a copy of your itinerary for a world trip. This is of interest to a friend. Would you:
 - a. phone him immediately and tell him about it?
 - b. send him a copy of the printed itinerary?
 - c. show him on a map of the world?
 - d. share what you plan to do at each place you visit?
- 4 You are going to cook something as a special treat for your family. Do you:
 - a. cook something familiar without the need for instructions?
 - b. thumb through the cookbook looking for ideas from the pictures?
 - c. refer to a specific cookbook where there is a good recipe?
- 5 You have been given responsibility for a group of foreign pupils who are writing a project on your home town/area. Would you:
 - a. take them on a guided trip?
 - b. show them slides and photographs?
 - c. find tourist brochures, local history books etc. to read?
 - d. tell them everything you know?
- 6 You are about to buy a new stereo. Other than price, what would most influence your decision:
 - a. your discussion with the salesperson?
 - b. reading the brochure and manual?
 - c. playing with the controls and listening to it?
 - d. its appearance?
- 7 You are going to put up a new tent for the first time. What would you find most helpful:
 - a. diagrams and drawings?
 - b. written instructions?
 - c. somebody explaining it?
 - d. being allowed to find out yourself by trial and error?
- 8 You have injured your knee. Would you prefer the doctor to:
 - a. tell you what is wrong?
 - b. show you a diagram of what is wrong?
 - c. use a model to show you what is wrong?
- 9 You are about to learn to use a new program on a computer. Would you:
 - a. sit down at the keyboard and begin to experiment with it?
 - b. read the manual which comes with the program?
 - c. ring a friend who knows the program?
- 10 You are staying in a hotel and have a rental car. You would like to visit friends whose address/location you do not know. Would you like them to:
 - a. draw you a map on paper?
 - b. tell you the directions?
 - c. write down the directions (without a map)?
 - d. collect you from the hotel in their car?

- 11 Apart from price, what would most influence your decision to buy a particular text-book?
- you have used a copy before
 - a friend talking about it
 - quickly reading parts of it
 - the way it looks is appealing
- 12 A new movie has arrived in town. What would most influence your decision to go (or not go)?
- you heard a radio review about it
 - you read a review about it
 - you saw a preview of it
- 13 Do you prefer a teacher who likes to use:
- a textbook, handouts, readings?
 - flow diagrams, charts, slides?
 - field trips, labs, practical sessions?
 - discussion, guest speakers?

Use the following chart to find which learning styles your answers correspond to. Note down the letters that correspond to your answers.

Question	a category	b category	c category	d category
1	V	A	R	K
2	R	V	A	K
3	A	R	V	K
4	K	V	R	
5	K	V	R	A
6	A	R	K	V
7	V	R	A	K
8	A	V	K	
9	K	R	A	
10	V	A	R	K
11	K	A	R	V
12	A	R	V	
13	R	V	K	A

Calculating your scores:

Count the number of each of the letters V A R K you have chosen.

What the test tells you

If you have scored high on the box marked V, it means that you have a preference for *visual* modes of learning. You find that charts, graphs, symbols and pictures help you to learn more easily.

If you have scored high on the box marked A, it means that you have a preference for *aural* modes of learning. In other words, you prefer to *hear* new information in the form of speech – lectures, discussions, radio programmes. You also find talking an important part of learning.

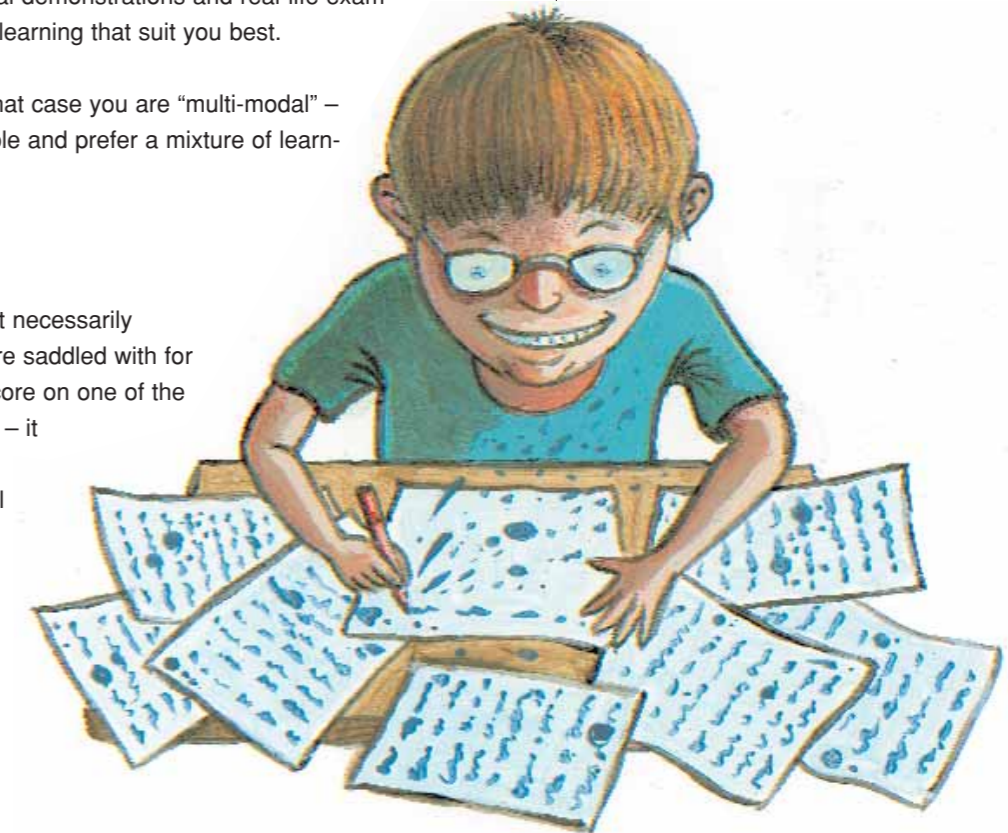
If you have scored high on the box marked R, it means you have a preference for *reading* and *writing* as modes of learning.

If you have scored high on the box marked K, it means that you have a preference for *kinesthetic* modes of learning. *Kinesthetic* means that you prefer “hands-on” modes of learning. Movement, role-play, practical demonstrations and real-life examples – these are some of the ways of learning that suit you best.

Perhaps you scored fairly evenly. In that case you are “multi-modal” – which means that you are pretty flexible and prefer a mixture of learning modes.

What the test doesn't tell you

The test results show preferences, not necessarily strengths and weaknesses that you are saddled with for life. In other words, if you get a low score on one of the modes – for example the visual mode – it doesn't mean that you can never become a “visual person”. You are still young, and you may well find that experience changes your learning preferences.



What use is the test?

The test makes you aware of how you prefer to learn. With this awareness you will be able to choose learning strategies that give the best results. Of course, you will sometimes have to use other learning modes than the ones you scored highest on. But there are many situations in which you can take advantage of your preferences. Here is some practical advice:

The Visual Learner

- Use underlining, highlighting and different colours in your notes
- Use symbols, pictures and diagrams wherever possible
- Use the illustrations in your textbooks as a way of remembering the contents

The Aural Learner

- Discuss topics with classmates and with the teacher
- Explain what you have learned to someone else (or aloud to yourself!)
- Whenever possible, listen to a new text as well as reading it

The Reading / Writing-Orientated Learner

- Write lists and definitions
- Organize diagrams and graphs into statements
- Read texts silently

The Kinesthetic Learner

- Use examples when learning difficult theory (like grammar)
- Use role play as much as possible
- Combine learning with movement and exercise