



# Learning Styles

**UTILISING HOW DIFFERENT PEOPLE LEARN**



# Maximising learning and development of employees

**With a vast array of learning delivery choices available to us, how do you go about deciding what learning approach works best for you and your staff?**

There are more choices than ever with technology giving us easy access to a wealth of information.

Take yourself back to your school days, you either loved it or hated it depending on the subject, teacher and the way in which it was taught. You may prefer to just 'give something a try' and see what happens, whilst others are more hesitant in jumping straight in and prefer reading about it first.

When thinking about learning and development for your staff, how well do you know their preferences and the best way that they learn? You might like to read a long article, but will your employees?

> **Consider the following:**

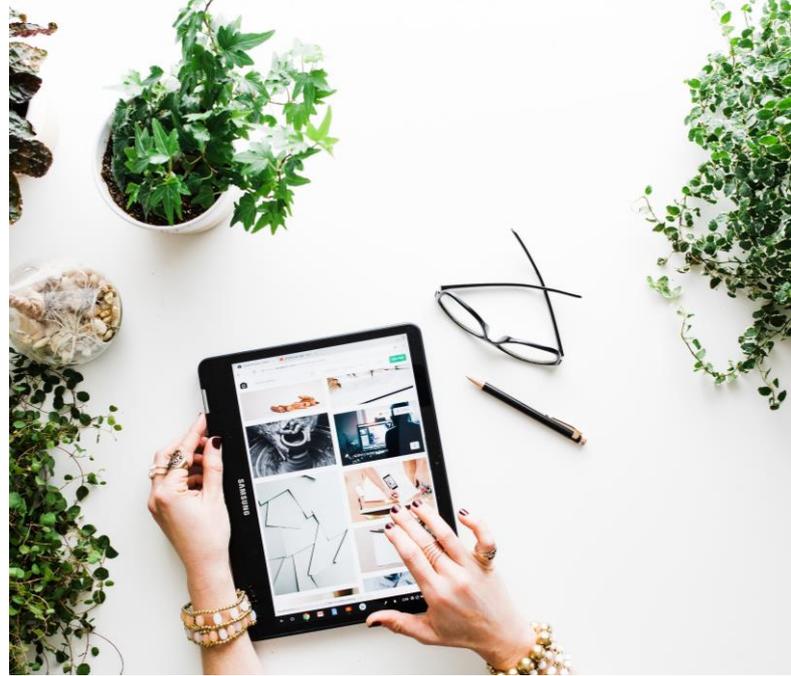
## VAK Model of learning

**It describes learners as Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic, which describes how you prefer to take in information.**

**Visual (seeing and reading)** learners prefer to take in information by seeing and often process it in pictorial form. This means that they will often think or remember things in pictures and like to read, see graphs, and use symbols.

**Auditory (listening and speaking)** learners prefer to listen and take information in by what they hear. They favour lectures and discussions over reading.

**Kinaesthetic (touching and doing)** learners learn by experience and particularly by tactile exploration of the world. They prefer to learn by experimentation.



> **Alternatively think about:**

## Honey and Mumford's 'learning styles'

**Learners can be classified by four distinct styles: activists, theorists, pragmatists and reflectors.**

**Activists** prefer to learn by doing, being willing to throw themselves into activities – 'Let's just give it a go and see what happens' or 'Can I try it out'

**Theorists** prefer to engage with concepts and facts to analyse and synthesise. But how does this fit with '{x}?' or 'I'd just like to understand the principles behind this a bit more'.

**Pragmatists** need to be able to see how to put learning into practice in the real world. 'How will it work in practice; or 'I just don't see how this is relevant'

**Reflectors** prefer to learn by observing and thinking, valuing different perspectives. 'Let me just think about this for a moment' or 'Don't let's rush into anything'

In order to learn effectively, it's important to be able to use all four styles, but most people have a preference for one or two. It's why some people just get stuck in and some prefer to read the instructions first.

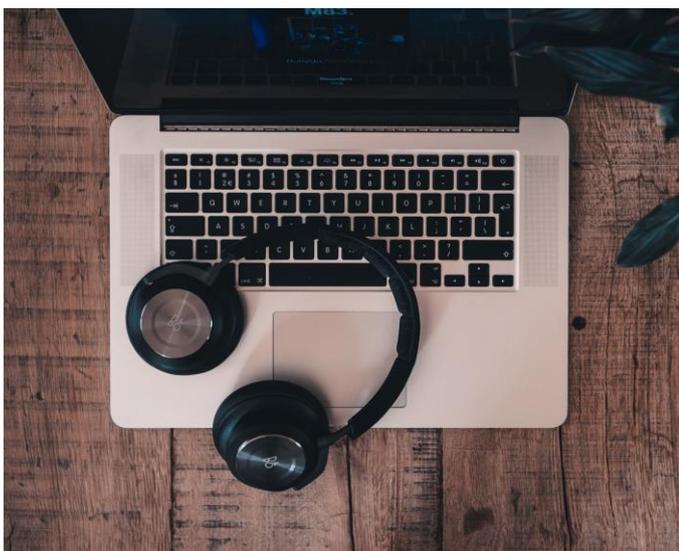
Particularly common mixtures seem to include Activist/Pragmatist and Reflector/Theorist.

As it's possible to learn and develop other styles, learning style preferences change over time.

# Practically, what does this mean?

**In order to make sure staff digest what you want them to learn, first you need to understand their preferred style.**

- Speak to your employees to understand their learning styles and discuss how their knowledge or skills gap is best supported.
- Review how learning is currently being delivered in your business – one solution doesn't necessarily fit all.
- Challenge learning providers by discussing the type of learning and how it will be delivered. Providers should be offering learning choices, delivering in multiple ways at multiple times.
- Encourage your employees to reflect on how they learnt – learning how to learn means they are developing themselves rather than just learning a skill.



## **Consider the learning choices available based on learning preferences**

### **E-learning**

This form of learning at a basic level is undertaken on your own and could involve, reading, listening and interactive quizzes/activities to engage the participant. Staff who have a visual or auditory preference may respond well to eLearning. Please consider if you, or they, have a computer with speakers/headphones available. Check to see if your employee is familiar with how a PC works. E-learning can be highly interactive and if designed well, will appeal to the learner by embedding a garden centre culture into the content itself.

### **Workshop**

Face to face group workshop Suits kinaesthetic, activists who want to 'give it a try' and are confident to do so in a group situation. Exercises that make it real and provide an opportunity to practice skills should be encouraged in group workshops. Kinaesthetic and activists may also respond well to on the job, practical training.

### **Coaching**

Suits pragmatists who want to take action in the real world. Consider carefully who will coach the person, ensuring they are both operating in a way the business supports and check that they have the skills to successfully coach someone. Conferences and seminars Conferences and seminars are suitable for all learning styles. The way you plan and prepare for an event and putting the learnings into practice will differ dependant on the learner. Take a look at our 'How to make the most out of attending conferences, events & exhibitions' booklet for more hints and tips dependant on your style of learning.



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