

The Knowledge House Guide to:

LEARNING STYLES

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Each child is created to be a unique individual and has a correspondingly unique set of strengths and weaknesses, skills and challenges. This includes how they perceive and process information, develop their talents, and exercise their whole potential. These differences are also apparent in how children learn – their learning style. Similarly, there is the theory of multiple intelligences which, unlike the traditional notion of IQ, accounts for a broader range of intelligences based on different ways people learn and think.

In order to adequately teach someone, you must first determine his or her innate gifts and abilities, perceptual strengths and weaknesses. In fact, educators should not ask, “Is this student smart?” but rather “How is this student smart?” The state’s one-size-fits-all curriculum does not lend itself to the different learning styles of children. Homeschooling enables you to tailor your child’s educational experiences to his or her particular style of learning. Determining learning styles aids parents in choosing the teaching method, curriculum content, testing approach, and extracurricular activities for their child.

Some children work best with a lot of structure, while others don’t. One child may learn best by reading books, another child may learn best by listening to audio CDs, and another may have to try out everything for himself. Although most children have a combination of learning styles, usually one style will be dominant. In the beginning, you may have to experiment until you discover the right learning style for your child. The different styles of learning are generally classified as follows:

Visual Learners love watching videos and reading books with stimulating illustrations (such as DK and Usborne). These children receive information best through their eyes– what they see and read. They may actually think in pictures, and providing a visual context helps these children to understand an idea or concept being taught. Visual displays may include: models, charts, graphs, diagrams, and handouts.

Auditory Learners receive and retain information best through listening, rather than simply reading chapters of text. This may include verbal lectures, discussions, reading aloud by a parent or sibling, story CDs, and audiobooks. These learners often benefit from reading text out loud, even if just to themselves, because written information may have little meaning until it is heard.

Kinesthetic Learners are always doing something, actively exploring the world around them. They are not content to merely observe, but must touch and manipulate everything that they encounter. They learn best through hands-on activities, field trips, unit studies and projects that bring subjects to life. Otherwise, they may become distracted and find it difficult to sit still for long periods because of their need for physical activity and exploration.

For more information on learning styles, please see the following:

The Way They Learn, by Cynthia Ulrich Tobias.

www.chaminade.org/inspire/learnstl.htm - Learning Styles Chart.

www.learning-styles-online.com - Discover your learning styles.

www.ldpride.net/learningstyles.MI.htm - Learning Styles and Multiple Intelligences.

www.thomasarmstrong.com/multiple_intelligences.htm - Multiple Intelligences.