

Learning Style Inventory

What Is Your Learning Style?

Have you noticed that you differ from some of your friends in the types of tasks you can perform easily and how you perform them? Do you have a friend who is mechanically inclined and can assemble toys or repair appliances with ease? Maybe you have noticed differences in how you and your friends solve problems and take in or remember information. You may be methodical and analytical, whereas a friend may get flashes of insight. You may be able to read printed information and recall it easily, but a friend finds it easier to learn from class lectures or a videotape. Have you noticed that some students prefer to work alone on a project, while others enjoy working as part of a group? These differences can be explained by what is known as learning style.

The term “Learning Style” refers to the set of preferences that describes how you learn. The following set of questions, called an inventory, will help you assess your learning style.

Learning Style Inventory

Part One: Taking the Inventory

Each numbered item presents two choices. Select the **one** alternative that best describes you.

There are no right or wrong answers. In cases in which neither choice suits you, select the one that is closer to your preference and **check the box** next to the answer.

1. In class I usually
☐ a. make friends with just a few students.
☐ b. get to know many of my classmates.
2. If I were required to act in a play, I would prefer to
☐ a. have the director tell me how to say my lines.
☐ b. read my lines the way I think they should be read.
3. Which would I find more helpful in studying the processes by which the U.S. Constitution can be amended?
☐ a. a one-paragraph summary
☐ b. a diagram
4. In making decisions, I am more concerned with
☐ a. whether I have all the available facts
☐ b. how my decision will affect others.
5. When I have a difficult time understanding how something works, it helps most if I can
☐ a. see how it works several times.
☐ b. take time to think the process through and analyze it.

6. At a social event, I usually
☐ a. wait for people to speak to me.
☐ b. initiate conversation with others.
7. I prefer courses that have
☐ a. a traditional structure (lectures, assigned readings, periodic exams, and assignments with deadlines).
☐ b. an informal structure (class discussions, flexible assignments, and student selected projects).
8. If I were studying one of the laws of motion in a physics course, I would prefer to have my instructor begin the class by
☐ a. stating the law and discussing examples.
☐ b. giving a demonstration of how the law works.
9. Which set of terms best describes me?
☐ a. fair and objective
☐ b. sympathetic and understanding
10. When I learn something new, I am more interested in
☐ a. the facts about it.
☐ b. the principles behind it.
11. As a volunteer for a community organization that is raising fund for a hospice, which of the following tasks would I prefer?
☐ a. stuffing envelopes for a mail campaign
☐ b. making phone calls asking for contributions
12. I would begin an ideal day by
☐ a. planning what I want to do during each hour of the day.
☐ b. doing whatever comes to mind
13. If I wanted to learn the proper way to prune a rosebush, I would prefer to
☐ a. have someone explain it to me.
☐ b. watch someone do it.
14. It is more important for me to be
☐ a. consistent in thought and action.
☐ b. responsive to the feelings of others.
15. If I kept a journal or diary, it would most likely contain entries about
☐ a. what happens to me each day.
☐ b. the insights and ideas that occur to me each day.
16. If I decided to learn a musical instrument, I would prefer to take
☐ a. one-on-one lessons.
☐ b. group lessons.

17. If I worked in a factory, I would prefer to be a
☐ a. machine operator.
☐ b. troubleshooter.
18. I learn best when I
☐ a. write down the information.
☐ b. form a mental picture of the information.
19. If I gave a wrong answer in class, my main concern would be
☐ a. finding out the correct answer.
☐ b. what others in class thought of me.
20. I prefer television news programs that
☐ a. summarize events through film footage and factual description.
☐ b. deal with the issues behind the events.
21. Whenever possible, I choose to
☐ a. study alone.
☐ b. study with a study group.
22. In selecting a topic for a research paper, my more important concern is
☐ a. choosing a topic for which there is adequate information.
☐ b. choosing a topic I find interesting.
23. If I took apart a complicated toy or machine to repair it, to help me reassemble it I would
☐ a. write a list of the steps I followed when taking it apart.
☐ b. draw a diagram of the toy or machine.
24. As a member of a jury for a criminal trial, I would be primarily concerned with
☐ a. determining how witness testimony fits with the other evidence.
☐ b. judging the believability of witnesses.
25. If I were an author, I would most likely write
☐ a. biographies or how-to books.
☐ b. novels or poetry.
26. A career in which my work depends on that of others is
☐ a. less appealing than working alone.
☐ b. more appealing than working alone.
27. When I am able to solve a problem, it is usually because I
☐ a. worked through the solution step by step.
☐ b. brainstormed until I arrived at a solution.
28. I prefer to keep up with the news by
☐ a. reading a newspaper.
☐ b. watching television news programs.

29. If I came upon a serious auto accident, my first impulse would be to
☐ a. assess the situation.
☐ b. comfort any injured people.
30. I pride myself on my ability to
☐ a. remember numbers and facts.
☐ b. see how ideas are related.
31. To solve a personal problem, I prefer to
☐ a. think about it myself.
☐ b. talk it through with friends.
32. If I had one last elective course to take before graduation, I would choose one that presents
☐ a. practical information that I can use immediately.
☐ b. ideas that make me think and stimulate my imagination.
33. For recreation I would rather do a
☐ a. crossword puzzle.
☐ b. jig-saw puzzle.
34. I can best be described as
☐ a. reasonable and levelheaded
☐ b. sensitive and caring.
35. When I read a story or watch a film, I prefer one with a plot that is
☐ a. clear and direct.
☐ b. intricate and complex.

Part Two: Scoring the Inventory

Directions for Scoring:

Step 1: Turn to the answer sheet

Step 2: On the answer sheet, check the box that you selected from the inventory worksheet for each question.

Step 3: Add the check marks in each "a" and "b" column. Counting first the number of "a(s)" checked, then the number of "b(s)".

Step 4: Transfer the numbers from the "Answer sheet" to the "Scoring Grid". Enter the number of *a* choices in column one in the blank labeled "Independent," the number of *b* choices in column one in the blank labeled "Social," and so on.

Step 5: Check the box for your higher score in each row. For example, If you scored 2 for Independent and 5 for Social, check the box next to "Social."

Note: Your higher score in each row indicates a characteristic of your learning style. If the scores in a particular row are close to one another, such as 3 and 4, this suggests that you do not have a strong preference for either approach to learning. Scores that are far apart, such as 1 and 6, suggest that you favor one way of learning over the other.

Part Three: Interpreting Your Scores

The Learning Style Inventory is divided into five parts; each question in the inventory assesses one of five aspects of your learning style. Here is how to interpret the five aspects of your learning style.

1. Independent or Social

These scores indicate the level of interaction with others that you prefer both in general and when you have a specific task to perform. *Independent* learners prefer to work and study alone. They focus on the task at hand rather than on the people around them. Independent learners are often goal-oriented and self-motivated. *Social* learners are more people-oriented. Because interaction with others is important to them, social learners often prefer to learn and study with classmates. They often focus their attention on those around them and see a task as an opportunity for social interaction.

2. Pragmatic or Creative

These scores suggest how you prefer to approach learning tasks. *Pragmatic* learners are practical and systematic. They approach tasks in an orderly, sequential manner. They like rules and learn step by step. *Creative* learners, in contrast, approach tasks imaginatively. They prefer to learn through discovery or experiment. They enjoy flexible, open-ended tasks and tend to dislike following rules.

3. Verbal or Spatial

These scores indicate the way you prefer to take in and process information. *Verbal* learners rely on language, usually written text, to acquire information. They are skilled in the use of language and can work with other symbol systems as well. *Spatial* learners prefer to take information by studying graphics such as drawings, diagrams, films, or videos. They can visualize in their minds how things work or how things are positioned in space.

4. Rational or Emotional

These scores suggest your preferred approach to decision making and problem solving. *Rational* learners are objective and impersonal; they rely on facts and information when making decisions or solving problems. Rational learners are logical, often challenging or questioning a task. They enjoy prioritizing, analyzing, and arguing. In contrast, *emotional* learners are subjective; they focus on feelings and values. Emotional decision makers are socially conscious and often concerned with what others think. In making a decision, they seek harmony and may base a decision in part on the effect it may have on others. Emotional decision makers are often skilled at persuasion.

5. Concrete or Abstract

These scores indicate how you prefer to perceive information. *Concrete* learners pay attention to what is concrete and observable. They focus on details and tend to perceive tasks in parts or steps. Concrete learners prefer actual, tangible tasks and usually take a no-nonsense approach to learning. *Abstract* learners look at a task from a broader perspective. They tend to focus on the “big picture” or an overview of a task. Abstract learners focus on large ideas, meanings, and relationships.

A Word about Your Findings

The results of the learning style inventory probably confirmed some things you already knew about yourself as a learner and may have provided you with some new insights as well. The inventory you completed measures the five aspects of learning style that are most relevant to the writing process; however, many other aspects of learning style exist. Also keep in mind that there are other ways to measure learning style.

The inventory you completed is an informal measure; other, more formal, measures of learning style are available including *Kolb's Learning Style Inventory*, *Canfield Instructional Styles Inventory*, and the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*. These tests may be available at your college through the counseling or academic skills centers or from your local public library.

You are the best judge of the accuracy of the results of this inventory and how they apply to you. If you think that one or more of the aspects of your learning style indicated by the inventory do not describe you, trust your instincts.

How to Use Your Findings

Now that you have identified important characteristics of your learning style, you are ready to use the findings to your advantage—to make learning easier and improve your writing skills. As you do so, keep the following suggestions in mind.

1. Understand that if you have a strength in one area, you can still function in the opposite way. For example, if you scored highly on the pragmatic scale, you are still capable of creative thinking as well.
2. Recognize that learning style tendencies are not fixed, unchangeable characteristics. Although you may have a higher score on the independent scale, for example, you can learn to function effectively in groups.
3. Experiment with approaches that are not necessarily suited to your learning style. Some students find that when they try an approach that never seemed to work before, they sometimes discover situations in which the approach is helpful. A verbal learner, for example, may discover that drawing a diagram of how a process works is an effective learning strategy.
4. Do not use your learning style as an excuse to avoid learning. Don't make the mistake of saying, "I can't write poetry because I'm not a creative learner." Instead, use what you know about your learning style to guide your approach to each task. If you are a pragmatic learner, try writing a poem about a tangible object or place or a real event: a favorite keepsake, a place where you go to sort out problems, or an event that made a lasting impression on you.