

Defining and Discovering Learning Styles and Patterns

By Glenn and Julianne Kimber

Young parents are sometimes bewildered by the behavior patterns of some of their children. Perhaps they notice that one child tends to be very quiet, polite, submissive and obedient. Yet another child "climbs the walls" all day, screaming at the top of his lungs just for fun, continually exploring dangerous places, and paying little attention to--in fact, defying--commands and rebukes.

Still another child will do practically anything to gather people around for a party, a gabbing session, or just plain company. Some children are "clingy," always touching things, grabbing, and mauling people and pets.

Is it possible to teach such different personalities at home--all at the same time? Wouldn't it be easier to just send them all to school for the day?

If schools had the ability to cater to the individual needs of each student, that might be the answer! But this is not the case today. It is estimated that ideally the teacher can spend only one and-a-half minutes with each student individually. Within the small manageable unit of the family, however, parents can handle these personalities one-on-one--for as long as it takes--and have greater success.

Parents will soon discover that these various personality traits in their children signal unique and individual patterns for learning. When these patterns are defined and understood, the child can be guided into curriculum that is tailored especially to his particular needs.

The Four Basic Patterns of Learning

The following descriptions of learning styles and patterns may be helpful guidelines for enhancing a child's education, and for tailoring their curriculum. Specific techniques that will work most effectively can then be chosen for teaching each child.

It will be noted that regardless of how each child learns best, it is still important to help him develop EACH of the four patterns. In this way, learning will become more balanced. All the suggested learning exercises, ideas, and activities should center around developing one or more of these four patterns:

"The Visual Learner"- learning through eyesight
"The Audio Learner"- learning through hearing
"The Tactile Learner"- learning through touch
"The Kinetic Learner"- learning through movement

Additional learning patterns are:

- Through music
- In a social environment
- With logic
- As an independent student

These latter styles of learning will be addressed later on, but for now, the four basic patterns are those which play the major roles in home-tutoring.

There are ways to tell whether or not a child is a visual, audio, tactile, or kinesthetic learner. One way is to take a "test" like the one we have provided at the end of this section. Another way is to read an action story to the child. Here is how each type of child will react to the story, depending on their individual learning pattern:

The Visual Learner

If the child learns by sight, he will pay particular attention to the pictures. He may want to turn the page before all the text has been read, just so he can see the next picture. He may not be as interested in *hearing* what is read, and in fact could seem to be ignoring the story altogether. To him, the important parts of the story are all the colorful pictures.

Television and computers will be great teaching tools for the visual learner. Parents will want to guide their children to positive learning experiences by showing videos about science, math, history, Bible stories, etc.

Computer games enthrall the visual learner, but as mentioned earlier, parents should be cautioned about the *sound* coming from -these games. Tests have proven that the beeps, blips, and electronic music coming out of some of these popular games can be hypnotic and addictive. Also, after a certain period of time for some unknown reason there begins to enter into the home a spirit of contention. The children start arguing and fighting over things that don't even matter. Parents will want to watch for this, and either turn the sound off or limit time on the computer.

Lots of colorful, creative visual aids are excellent for the visual learner. Learning to read and write comes quite easily because this kind of student can usually see a word, memorize the

inscriptions, observe the orders of the letters, and catch the meaning all at the same time.

To encourage the sight learner to “hear” instructions and information, he could close his eyes while a story is read. Usually when the question is asked "Can you see the pictures in your head as I read?" he will be able to answer in the affirmative if he is concentrating on listening.

Using a piano or a keyboard will also help develop his sense of hearing. Parents can demonstrate high notes, low notes, harmony and the beauty of a lovely melody. As with the reading, if the student keeps his eyes closed, the hearing sense will "tune in" more rapidly. When the student's hearing sense begins to develop, he can try to match his voice to a note being played.

Learning the pattern of touch can be enhanced by playing games of "feel." For example, familiar objects can be placed in a sack, and with eyes closed he can try to guess what the objects are. Talking about the texture of things at home helps him "visualize" touch.

Often, sight learners can do quiet creative work in one place for hours. To encourage kinetic movement, you might exercise together; jog or walk. Put on some wholesome, lively music and dance!

The Audio Learner

When a child learns by hearing, he will most likely be able to repeat a story word for word after listening to it a time or two. This also applies to conversations--so parents will need to watch what they say within his hearing!

The audio learner may be interested in the pictures as a story is read, but he'll be more intent on hearing the words. This child probably learned to talk early because he could formulate the sounds he heard through his sense of hearing. Recalling names of objects and people come very easily to him.

Recordings and CDs will be this student's educational joy. Memorization will seldom be a problem. The use of music cannot be over emphasized. This child will most likely learn anything through a song. Parents can take advantage of the vast market of resources for learning with music.

The audio learner may have a much more difficult time with reading and writing than the visual learner. For him, the consistency of *phonetic* letters and words is very important and inconsistencies become very frustrating. Words and spellings must be repeated audibly by the parent and the child himself for best comprehension.

The drawback to learning how to read for the audio learner is the fact that there are so many “meaningless” (to him) symbols as well as exceptions to English pronunciation rules. For example: bough, rough, see and sea. He might exclaim in dismay, “I don’t know what that letter

is!" or "That word isn't spelled like it sounds!"

Parents can help with the child's frustration by having him close his eyes and listen to words being spelled. Afterwards; he can repeat the spelling aloud, open his eyes and then write down the word while repeating it aloud once more. The word is then impressed into his mind as he hears it, sees it and writes it (touch).

To encourage learning by sight, the audio learner will respond to bright-colored (even fluorescent) visual aids for all subjects. To memorize math facts, for example, colorful cards can be used for practice, as he reads them aloud. Remember that—until the other senses are developed--hearing must always accompany what the child is looking at. To further enhance learning by sight, the parent can also bring attention to the color of things around him- pointing out pleasant-contrasts, bright rainbows, autumn leaves, or the soft hues of blue snow at night, and so forth.

The audio-learner can learn by touch by having someone "write" on his back various letters or words. He will concentrate hard to figure it out. Creating his own colorful flash cards for memorizing words or the times tables, etc., will also help. In addition, he could record onto a tape recorder or cell phone all the multiplication facts, and then write them while listening to his own voice.

Learning to play the piano, flute, violin, trumpet, saxophone, etc., will normally be easy for him and also enhances his sense of touch.

For helping to develop kinetics or movement, opportunities for plays and role-playing will most likely come naturally. Listening to and memorizing a part will usually be "a cinch." And because the audio learner can readily hear inflections of the voice, dramatizations become a fun way to encourage movement and expend energy

The Tactile Learner

If a child seems to always want to touch things and people, the sensations to "feeling" on the skin is the open door to learning.

Parents will want to present opportunities for this student to touch the things about which they are learning. For instance, the American flag should be touched, felt, held, and paraded around by a student who loves to touch. He will learn to love the flag by respectfully holding it while a lesson on the flag is being taught and during the pledge of allegiance.

When teaching the alphabet and spelling, small plastic or wooden letters are excellent tools for helping the tactile learner "feel" new concepts. Likewise, tangible objects such as beads, beans, macaroni or coins for counting are excellent for learning math skills.

Many parents recommend the tactile-oriented "Mortensen Math" where all the concepts of math can be figured with small variable-sized plastic blocks. Cuisenaire rods are also excellent tools.

While learning how to read, the tactile learner should be allowed to underline sentences with his fingers as he reads along. As we have previously discussed, it was thought that using a finger to underline words was the "baby" way to read. But recent research has proven that underlining the words with two fingers, or even the whole hand -- like readers of Hebrew do—is an excellent way to increase reading speed and comprehension.

To encourage learning through sight, sight games can be played--like "I see something green and white. What do I see?" Many of the previously discussed exercises are valuable to the tactile learner, always emphasizing the size, color and texture of things in the world around him -- especially those that the child can touch.

To enhance hearing, the piano (or any kind of instrument, as mentioned before) will probably intrigue the tactile learner because he can touch the keys, or blow through a little hole, or bang musical objects together to get interesting sounds. When he practices singing tones played on some of the instruments, his hearing skills will develop more fully..

For the tactile student who may need encouragement in movement (which usually isn't very often), tag and other "touching" games such as football, soccer and even jacks and hopscotch will enhance his kinetic senses.

The Kinetic Learner

If a child begins to act out a story that is being read, he may be a "kinetic" learner--one who tends to learn best by "doing." This student is probably extremely active, always investigating cupboards and closets, and tearing things apart--just to see how they work. Everything in life seems to be open for an investigation by this type of child. Like most children, he will imitate, but his imitations will probably be very much exaggerated and melodramatic. He's a natural-born actor.

Action and movement are the kinetic child's motivations to learn. Dramatic presentations and role-plays are ways to cement knowledge into his mind with ease.

Parents will want to guide this child towards learning activities which involve play-acting, and expose him to wholesome theater arts. Old-fashioned ballroom dancing is an excellent outlet and would be a good way to satisfy his craving for "whole-body" expression.

Teaching this student the importance of reading will be a challenge to say the least! He will not

want to sit still long enough to concentrate on the meaningless squiggles which have been carefully placed in front of him. But before the kinetic student is in his teens, a specific interest will usually spark his desire for knowledge.

He will most likely be interested in subjects or objects connected with *action*. If his interest is jet airplanes, for example, he will discover the need for being able to read, so he can understand how and why they work. Parents can guide all of this child's learning towards his action-packed interest. He'll pick it up because he wants to know about his favorite subject.

Kinetic children normally do not learn how to read simply for the sake of reading.

However, to encourage all the other patterns of learning, the active child will need to learn to slow down long enough to concentrate. This principle of concentration needs to be taught by degrees, however. For example, he can stare at an object for 20 seconds (without moving), then close his eyes and "see" the object in opposite colors. This is also a good exercise for enhancing visual skills.

One activity to help upgrade his hearing is to have him go outside and listen to all the sounds he can hear. Have him stand still and listen for ten full seconds, without moving a muscle. Then he can come back in and write down all the sounds that he heard.

Each time this exercise is repeated more seconds can be added. When this student is able to stand quietly for two full minutes, he'll be much better in church!

Because the kinetic child can also learn by touch as well as movement, he just needs to slow down long enough to feel things like the roughness of bark on a tree, cool wet blades of grass, a smooth ball, or the down of a dandelion gone to seed. A parent can teach about these things, all along the way.

Whole-Brain Learning

Studies have proven recently that right-brain learning is the "meaning and feeling" side of the mind. Left-brain learning uses the "logic, factual" side of the mind. When these two hemispheres are working at the same time, researchers call it "whole-brain learning."

Information learned this way is rarely forgotten. The researchers agree that if both hemispheres of the brain are being used at the same time in the learning process, greater and longer-lasting learning will take place.

For example, learning a particular historical date is a left-brain function. It has no meaning. There is no correlation to any other fact. When we attach a major personality and a significant

event to the date it becomes a right-brain function because there is meaning and feeling. The date 1215 is left-brained. Add “King John” and “The Magna Charta” and the date comes to life with much meaning and lots of stories of freedom from despotism can be attached to that date.

A fun whole-brain game to play which combines all four of the learning patterns is with the use of Maui (ma-ow-ee) sticks. These round dowels are about one and one-half to two inches in diameter and about one foot long. The student sits with a partner, both having a Maui stick in each hand. While music is played (not too fast--in $\frac{3}{4}$ time), the sticks are tapped once on the floor, then clicked together, then tossed to the partner, alternating one stick each time--keeping beat with the music.

When they master the basic straight-across toss, students can try criss-crossing the sticks to each other. The final test of coordination is when the partners are able to toss and catch both sticks at the same time!

It takes a lot of coordination to 1) keep time with the rhythm of the music, 2) coordinate sight, 3) keep track of touch, and 4) concentrate on movement. This is quite a whole-brained activity for anyone!

Even though a child may tend to learn more efficiently in one of the four areas we have mentioned, parents and teachers will want to incorporate all the other senses in the home and classroom, striving always to provide opportunities for whole-brain learning.

Three Additional Learning Patterns

You will recall that we mentioned three other learning patterns. Following is a brief description of how parents can help particular children learn better when they are inclined towards these three other learning styles.

MUSIC: Children gifted in this way learn best through rhythm and melody. They can learn anything more easily if it is sung, danced to, tapped out, or whistled. Provide music lessons if desired, lots of opportunities for music appreciation, and sing-along time.

LOGIC: Children who have logical leanings often think in terms of concepts and look for abstract patterns and relationships. They need to be provided with materials they can experiment with, such as science kits. They also need to be allowed lots of time to explore new ideas. Logical explanations need to be given when probing questions are asked. Their personality wants to go from Point A to Point B without distractions and with specific instructions. The child might not respond if you say, “I need a broom.” The straightforward instruction would be: “Bring me the broom from the kitchen closet.”

INDEPENDENT LEARNERS: Children who learn in this direction frequently learn best when

left to themselves. Parents should allow them to develop their own learning activities, or give them self-correcting teaching materials that they can use on their own. These types of children always seem to have a motivation to learn, and are a delight to teach because they don't need a lot of supervision!

What About the Student Who “Won't?”

Every once in awhile, a student comes along who will not cooperate in any learning environment. There are several approaches which can be used, but the most important thing parents will want to remember is: **Relationship is more important than scholarship.**

If a child is being belligerent, or refuses to learn, the question needs to be asked: *Why doesn't this student want to learn?* Parents and teachers soon recognize that the answer may lie with one or a combination of the following:

- Bad timing
 - Lack of interest in -- or dislike for -- the subject itself
 - Dislike for the method of teaching being used
 - Personality conflict between student and instructor
 - Level of difficulty either too high or too low
 - Student does not understand the material
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- Student just isn't in the mood
 - The student wants to do it later, not now

The age of a student is also important, especially during the teen years. An excellent resource we recommend for teaching during the different stages of growing up is the best-selling book *So You Want to Raise A Boy* by W. Cleon Skousen. Most libraries have copies of this best seller, and it is also available at www.skousen2000.com in both audio and hard copy.

All the above attitudes are normal at one time or another as a student matures. But it is important for all of us to remember that the reasons for not wanting to learn must be eliminated--not harshly, but gently, with an understanding of the child's position.

The key is first discovering--and then developing--the child's individual interests. What does the student really want to learn about? How does this particular student learn? Whenever high interest is demonstrated by the student in his area of interest, then math, science, language arts, history, art, writing, and a love of learning will all come naturally.

One young man was having a very difficult time in every subject. To him, learning was boring, dull and unrelated to his life. When asked, he admitted that his real interest was motorcycles. A wise instructor guided all his teaching around the student's interest in motorcycles.

He had the boy figure out on paper an imaginary trip across the U.S. on his own motorcycle. How much gas and oil would the motorcycle use? How many miles would he travel? Which freeways would get him there faster? What kind of terrain would he encounter? What about traveling in different kinds of weather? How much money would the trip require? What should he pack--and how much could the motorcycle carry?

As the young man figured out all these things, he suddenly discovered (but didn't admit for quite a while!) that math, geography, mechanics, science, meteorology, map reading and organizational skills were really fun learning experiences!

At the same time, the young man and his instructor developed a lasting friend-to-friend relationship while learning together. The instructor knew the principle that "relationship is more important than scholarship."

Personal Learning Patterns

Here is a quiz to see how YOU best learn. You might want to give this chart to each of your children or students to determine their learning style, in case you don't know what it might be.

NAME: _____

Date _____

☒ Check all that apply	True	False
LIST #1		
If I have to learn something new, I like to learn about it this way:		
1. Read a book		
2. Listen to an audio book		
3. Listen to someone tell about it		
4. Watch a power point about it		
5. Watch and listen to a movie		
6. Look at pictures and have someone explain them		
7. Hear my teacher tell me all about it		
8. Play games about the subject		
9. Go someplace and find out about it myself		
10. Have someone show me		
LIST #2		
The things I remember best are the things that:		
1. My teacher tells me.		
2. Someone other than my teacher tells me		
3. Someone shows me		
4. I learned about on trips		
5. I read		
6. I heard from someone		
7. I heard on the radio		
8. I saw on television		
9. I wrote about		
10. I saw in a movie		
11. I tried to do, or worked on		
12. My friends and I talked about		

(Continued, next page)

☒ Check all that apply	True	False
LIST #3		
I really like to:		
1. read books, magazines and newspapers		
2. watch movies		
3. listen to recordings/CDs		
4. make recordings		
5. draw		
6. look at pictures		
7. play games		
8. talk to people, even if I don't know them		
9. listen to people's conversations		
10. listen to the radio		
11. watch television		
12. play music on an instrument		
13. go on trips		
14. give hugs		
15. study with friends		
16. build things		
17. do experiments		
18. take pictures or make movies		
19. use keyboards, work on computers, use calculators		
20. go to the library to study		
21. trace things in sand		
22. mold things with my hands		
23. be outside most of the time		
24. stay in my room a lot		
25. read scriptures		
26. be in plays and performances		
27. dance		
28. whistle		
29. dress up in costume		
30. sing		

Key to Learning Patterns Questionnaire

Auditory--hearing • Visual--seeing • Tactile--touch • Kinetic--movement

Instructions: Match all the "true" answers in each of the three lists with the key below. (There are some duplications.) Circle each "true" answer on the key, add the total, and write the sum in the blank at the bottom of the page. (Below the blank is written the total number possible.) Figure the percentage by dividing the number :possible INTO the number of answers that were circled. The greatest percentage of answers in a column most likely indicates that person's learning style.

Visual (# true)	Auditory (# true)	Tactile (# true)	Kinetic (# true)
List 1 (10)	List 1 (10)	List 1 (10)	List 1 (10)
1	2	8	9
4	3		
5	5		
6	6		
8	7		
10			
List 2 (12)	List 2 (12)	List 2 (12)	List 2 (12)
3	1	9	4
5	2	11	11
8	6		12
9	7		
10			
List 3 (30)	List 3 (30)	List 3 (30)	List 3 (30)
1	3	5	4
2	8	7	7
5	9	13	8
6	10	14	12
11	28	15	16
12	30	18	17
17		20	18
18			19
20			27
			29

TOTALS: _____
 Percent _____

I am probably a _____ learner