

Active and Reflective Learning



Active learners understand new information by doing something with it. Active learners are keen to try out and experiment with the new information and often enjoy group work because this enables them to do active things. Sitting through lectures with nothing to actually get involved in can be particularly difficult for active learners.



Reflective learners prefer to think about new information first before acting on it. They often prefer to think through problems first on their own rather than discussing it in groups. Sitting through lectures can be difficult for reflective learners who often like to have some time out to think through new information.

Active Learning Preference

If you have a strong preference for active learning, you need to be aware of the potential dangers of jumping into things prematurely without thinking them through.

As an active learner you will learn most effectively when you are actively discussing, problem solving and finding things to do with new information.

No Preference

Everybody is active sometimes and reflective sometimes. Often it depends on the situation so if you have a balance between the two learning styles this is fortunate. You will generally be able to adapt to different teaching styles.

Reflective Learning Preference

If you have a strong preference for reflective learning you need to be aware of the potential dangers of spending too much time thinking about something rather than actually getting it done.

As a reflective learner you will learn best when you allocate time for thinking about and digesting new information. It may also be helpful to stop and periodically review new work, write summaries and think of possible questions about new information.

Sensing and Intuitive Learning



Sensing learners like learning facts and solving problems by well established methods. They are generally careful, practical and patient and like new knowledge to have some connection to the real world.



Intuitive learners prefer discovering new relationships and can be innovative in their approach to problem solving. Intuitive learners tend to work faster and dislike repetition and work that involves a lot of memorization and routine calculations.

Sensing Learning Preference

If you have a strong preference for sensing learning you need to be aware of the potential dangers of relying too much on memorization and familiar methods and not concentrate enough on understanding and innovative thinking.

As a sensing learner you will learn most effectively when you understand how abstract and theoretical work relates to the real world. You may need to seek information from texts,

lecturers, tutors and friends of specific examples of how new concepts apply in practice.

Your careful and patient approach will help you with problem solving but to be most effective as a learner and problem solver, you will also have to function as an intuitive learner at times.

No Preference

Everybody is sensing sometimes and intuitive sometimes. Often it depends on the situation so if you have a balance between the two learning styles this is fortunate. You will generally be able to adapt to different teaching styles.

Intuitive Learning Preference

If you have a strong preference for intuitive learning you need to be aware of the potential dangers of missing important details or making careless mistakes in calculations or hands-on work.

As an intuitive learner you will discover that many lectures will suit your learning style by encouraging creative and innovative thinking. When lectures and tutorials involve memorization and repetition, you may need to be careful that you don't get bored and overlook details. In other words, to be an effective learner and problem solver, you will also have to function as a sensing learner at times.

Visual and Verbal Learning



Visual learners understand new information best by seeing it in the form of pictures, demonstrations, diagrams, charts, films and so on.



Verbal learners understand new information best through written and spoken words.

Visual Learning Preference

If you have a strong preference for visual learning you may find it frustrating that many lectures have a heavy emphasis on listening to somebody talk and written material in the form of overheads or handouts. You may need to counteract this by creating very visual notes of your own. You can incorporate diagrams and flow charts into your notes or use concept or mind maps. You may want to check out the modules Note-taking and Mind Mapping to learn more about these techniques.

Effective learners are capable of processing information presented either visually or verbally.

No Preference

Everybody learns more when information is presented both visually and verbally and effective learners are capable of processing information presented either way. There is often a tendency for lectures to be presented more verbally so you may find it helpful to develop a more visual note-taking style in order that you receive information in the balanced way that you prefer. You may want to check out the modules Note-taking and Mind Mapping to learn more about visual note-taking techniques.

Verbal Learning

If you have a strong preference for verbal learning many lecturing styles will suit you. You may also find it helpful to put new information in your own words. You will find tutorials useful as well as other environments where you are working in groups, explaining your own ideas and listening to others' explanations.

Effective learners are capable of processing information presented either visually or verbally so you may want to check out the modules Note-taking and Mind Mapping to learn more about visual note-taking techniques.

Sequential and Global Learning



Sequential learners understand new information in linear steps where each step follows logically from the previous one.



Global learners tend to learn in large jumps by absorbing material in a random order without necessarily seeing any connections until they have grasped the whole concept.

Sequential Learning Preference

If you have a strong preference for sequential learning you may have trouble relating the specifics of a subject to other areas of the subject or to different subjects. Many courses are taught in a sequential manner and this will suit you but when you encounter a lecturer who jumps around to different topics or skips steps you may need to compensate for this by reviewing and revising your notes in a logical order. You could also ask questions about these missing steps in lectures or tutorials.

You may also strengthen your global learning skills by always trying to relate new information to things you already know and to the big picture of a course or subject.

No Preference

You are fortunate to be able to adopt both learning styles and will have probably already observed that most courses tend to be taught in a sequential manner. This means that you may have to employ global learning techniques such as relating the specifics of a subject to a big picture and relating new information to things you already know, in order to gain the balance you desire.

Both sequential and global learning styles are important for effective learning.

Global Learning

If you have a strong preference for global learning you may find a new topic frustrating until you have the whole picture and can see where the topic fits in and relates to your existing knowledge.

Some techniques that assist global learners involve skimming chapters and notes to gain an overview and immersion in a whole subject rather than spending short study times on a range of subjects. For global learners, it helps to get the big picture more quickly so you may wish to pay particular attention to the opening remarks of a lecture or to ask questions that help you understand the relevance of the new information.