Chapter 2 Learning Preferences

Mary Shier

Mary Shier

Student Success
An Invaluable Resource for
College and University Students

collection.bccampus.ca BCcampus OpenEd

This resource is a chapter from the book, *Student Success: An Invaluable Resource for College and University Students* by Mary Shier, published by BCcampus Open Education, illustrated by Gordon Shier.

Note that page numbers reflect the page numbers in the full textbook.

The full text can be found at **opentextbc.ca/studentsuccess**, where it can be read online, downloaded, printed, or ordered.

Sample APA-style citation:

This textbook can be referenced. In APA citation style, it would appear as follows:

> Shier, M. (2020). *Student Success*. Victoria, B.C.: BCcampus. Retrieved from https://opentextbc.ca/studentsuccess/

Introduction

This module recognizes that all people learn differently. Learners have different learning preferences, strengths, and challenges, and they can utilize different strategies to make their learning most effective. Learning preferences include the mode or combination of modes that learners tend to prefer or respond well to, including aural, visual, verbal, and kinesthetic. Some people learn well by specifically including one or more of: reading, listening, speaking, watching, or practising. Memory is most enhanced when a combination of modes are used. Some types of learning work better with some modes. For example, when it comes to learning to ski, it is much more efficient to practice it than to read about it. Along with the type of learning and the preference of the learner, it is good to note that individual learners have different strengths and abilities. Utilizing these to the fullest makes for better learning.

Along with preferences and strengths, learners have different challenges. These can come in the form of learning challenges or challenging circumstances. Learning challenges can include learning disabilities of varying degrees, or if not diagnosed disabilities, learning struggles that have impeded ability to learn in the past. Challenging circumstances that affect learning can include temporary or long-term circumstances that impact ability to learn such as losing a loved one, medical conditions, or dysfunctional living conditions. These often have a negative impact on learners' abilities to be successful at school.

Identifying and recognizing all these factors impacting learning will help you to examine different strategies and supports to help you to maximize your learning at post-secondary.

Learning Objectives

In this chapter on "Learning Preferences," students will:

- Identify own learning preferences and strengths.
- Recognize how personal learning preferences affect perception and processing information.
- Recognize learning differences and challenges and their impact on learners.
- Examine different applicable strategies.

2.1 Learning Preferences and Strengths

What Are Your Learning Preferences?

Different people have different learning preferences. There are many models which are used to describe these preferences. Learning styles is one that accounts for learner differences, which can be useful in understanding the different ways we learn. It can also be useful to know your strengths and use them to enhance learning.

Style refers to a student's specific learning preferences and actions. One student may learn more effectively from listening to the instructor, while another prefers to take notes. Another learns more effectively from reading the textbook, while another student benefits most from charts, graphs, and images the instructor

Knowing how to utilize your learning preferences helps you become a more efficient learner.

presents during a lecture. It's important to note that people don't necessarily have a single style. Students can use different styles in different situations, but they often tend toward specific preferences.

Learning style is important in college and university. Each different style, described later in more detail, has certain advantages and disadvantages compared with other styles. None is "right" or "wrong." You can learn to use different styles more effectively.

Instructors also have different teaching styles, which may or may not match up well with your learning preference. Although you may personally prefer a certain style of teaching, you cannot expect that your instructors will use exactly the style that you prefer. Therefore it is important to know how to adapt to teaching styles.

It is important to note that there are many criticisms of the learning styles model. Some researchers purport that there is no evidence that identifying a learner's learning style and then teaching to it accordingly results in increased student outcomes. Another criticism is that identifying one single learning style or method of learning and focusing on it alone can result in ignoring the other learning modalities, and this could ultimately hamper learning. It is much more useful to think of it like this: if you recognize a learning strength, then use that strength by adding more of it to your learning strategies. But don't stop using the other modalities. For example, if you discover that listening is a strength for you, then it would be useful for you to add listening activities to your coursework, such as downloading lectures and re-listening to them while you are doing other activities (riding the bus, going for a run, or doing the dishes). But listening to lectures on your phone should not *replace* attending classes, practising concepts by doing homework questions, or working together in study groups – as these are all things that can enhance your learning as well.

Consider the following theories and see if any of the concepts resonate with you.
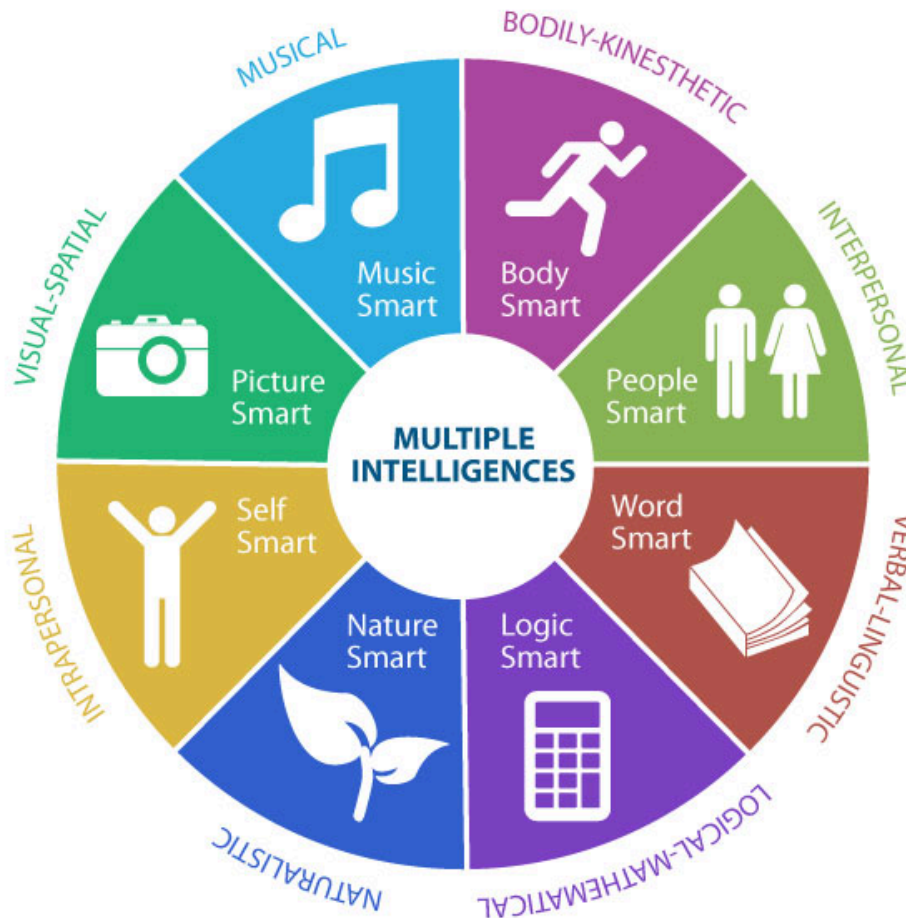
Multiple Intelligences

Often, we associate learning in university with strengths in reading and writing. Though it is true that reading and writing are important skills used in many courses, you can also apply other learning strengths to contribute to successful learning.

Different systems have been used to describe the different ways in which people learn. Some describe the differences between how extroverts (outgoing, gregarious, social people) and introverts (quiet, private, contemplative people) learn. Some divide people into "thinkers" and "feelers."

A popular framework is *Multiple Intelligences*, based on research by Howard Gardner. Gardner proposed that there are eight different ways of learning, creating things, and solving problems. Everyone uses all eight of these intelligences; however, in each individual, some intelligences are areas of strength, while others are weaker, leading to different preferences in learning. The eight multiple intelligences are:

1. Verbal (prefers words)
2. Logical (prefers math and logical problem solving)
3. Visual (prefers images and spatial relationships)
4. Kinesthetic (prefers body movements and doing)
5. Rhythmic (prefers music, rhymes)
6. Interpersonal (prefers group work)
7. Intrapersonal (prefers introspection and independence)
8. Naturalist (prefers nature, natural categories)

The Multiple Intelligences are music smart (musical), body smart (body-kinesthetic), people smart (interpersonal), word smart (verbal-linguistic), logic smart (logical-mathematical), nature smart (naturalistic), self smart (intrapersonal), and picture smart (visual-spatial). Gardner later added life smart (existential).

Here is a more detailed description of the different intelligences:

The Multiple Intelligences

Intelligence	Description
"Word smart" Verbal-Linguistic Intelligence	The capacity to use language to express what's on your mind and to understand other people. People who are high in this intelligence are sensitive to language, meanings, and the relationship of words. They engage easily with vocabulary activities, grammar, poetry, essays and plays.
"Logic smart" Logical-Mathematical Intelligence	People with a highly developed logical-mathematical intelligence understand the underlying principles of some kind of a causal system; or can manipulate numbers, quantities, and operations. Abstract thinking, counting, organizing; and logical structures are preferred by people high in this intelligence. They also like critical thinking activities, breaking words into smaller parts and reassembling them.

"Picture smart" Visual-Spatial Intelligence	People strong in this intelligence have the ability to represent the spatial world internally in their minds. Spatial intelligence can be used in the arts or in the trades and sciences. Those who are spatially intelligent and oriented toward the arts, are more likely to become painters or sculptors or architects than, say, musicians or writers. These people tend to be keen observers, able to think in three dimensions, and like to use metaphors. Learning materials that work well for them include: graphs, charts, colour codes, guided imagery, pictures, posters, and mind maps.
"Body smart" Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence	Body smart people have the capacity to use their whole body or parts of their body –hands, fingers, arms – to solve a problem, make something, or put on some kind of a production. These people have good body control and fine motor skills; and are often active and animated. They need "hands-on" learning opportunities, like shop, labs, games, skits, and plays.
"Music smart" Musical Intelligence	Music smart people have the capacity to think in music, to be able to hear patterns, recognize them, remember them, and perhaps manipulate them. People who have a strong musical intelligence don't just remember music easily – they can't get it out of their minds, it's so omnipresent. People will be sensitive to rhythm, pitch, intonation, and can remember tunes and rhythms easily. They tend to like poems, plays, jazz chants, rap music, songs, and musically guided imagery.
"People smart" Interpersonal Intelligence	Those who are people smart have an understanding of other people. Anybody who deals with people has to be skilled in the interpersonal sphere. This is a social intelligence and those who are high in this area are outgoing and interactive; sensitive to others' moods, feelings, and motivations.
"Self smart" Intrapersonal Intelligence	Self smart people have an understanding of themselves, of knowing who they are, what they can do, what they want to do, how they react to things, which things to avoid, and which things to gravitate toward. They tend to know what they can do. They tend to know what they can't do, and they also tend to know where to go if they need help.
"Nature smart" Naturalistic Intelligence	Nature smart people have the ability to discriminate among living things (plants, animals), sensitivity to other features of the natural world (clouds, rock configurations) as well as a good sense of their surroundings and environment. They are also sensitive to changes around them, both outdoors and indoors.
Gardner later added a 9th intelligence: "Life Smart" Existential Intelligence	People with existential intelligence have the sensitivity and capacity to tackle deep questions about human existence, such as the meaning of life, the reason for death, and the explanation of how we got here. They tend to be reflective, deep-thinking, and able to design abstract theories. They appreciate multiple perspectives, see connections, challenge assumptions, and push boundaries. They can become scientists, philosophers, and theologians.

It is also important to note that we can continue to develop our intelligence, and use multiple intelligences to learn content in any course. Our brains continue to grow and develop over time, even into adulthood. Taking full advantage of these opportunities for growth can support learning in any course.

> **Exercise: Multiple Intelligences**
>
> Go to Howard GardnerL Multiple Intelligences Test (http://www.businessballs.com/ howardgardnermultipleintelligences.htm#multiple%20intelligences%20tests) and scroll down to the link for "free Multiple Intelligences test (based on Howard Gardner's model)—in Microsoft Excel self-calculating format, and other versions." You need Microsoft Excel on your computer to take this free online assessment of your preferred multiple intelligences learning styles.
>
> Clicking the link will download an Excel spreadsheet with 74 questions. Answer each as directed on the 1 to 4 scale. Your score totals are then shown for each of the "multiple intelligences" learning styles.
>
> OR
>
> Use this assessment to discover your intelligence strengths:
>
> Multiple Intelligences Self-Assessment Quiz (https://www.edutopia.org/multiple-intelligences-assessment)
>
> 1. What are your two strongest "intelligence types?"
> 2. What are your two weakest "intelligence types?"
> 3. Based on this evaluation, what aspects of learning might you want to give more attention to?

The multiple intelligences approach recognizes that different people have different ways, or combinations of ways, of relating to the world. Here is an example of visual-spatial intelligence, as an artistic, autistic savant draws the New York City skyline from memory.

Video: "Stephen Wiltshire draws NYC for UBS" (length 3:49)

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://opentextbc.ca/studentsuccess/?p=68#oembed-1 (#oembed-1)

VARK Learning Styles

A popular approach to learning styles is called the VARK approach [1], which focuses on learning through different senses (**V**isual, **A**ural, **R**eading/ Writing, and **K**inesthetic):

- **V**isual learners prefer images, charts, and the like.

- **A**ural learners learn better by listening.

- **R**eading/writing learners learn better through written language.

- **K**inesthetic learners learn through doing, practising, and acting.

You can take a free, self-scored online assessment of your VARK learning style at VARK Learning Styles Questionnaire [PDF] (http://www.businessballs.com/freepdfmaterials/ vak_learning_styles_questionnaire.pdf).

Once you discover the differences in learning styles and how they pertain to you, it may help you to shed light on your own learning habits and preferences, and give you ideas for incorporating other strategies. You shouldn't conclude that you are one type of learner or another and that you

Hands on learning

should just focus your learning on using your preferred learning style as previously thought. It can be hard to break study habits which have formed over many years. However, by incorporating different modalities in your learning, you are more likely to remember and understand. Think of it as having a toolbox of ways to think and learn, and for each task, ask yourself which tool is the best one for the job.

There are many systems used by educators to describe the various ways in which people learn. These systems can help you learn more about how you as an individual person and post-secondary student learn – both in your current study strategies and in how you could enhance your learning by including other less familiar strategies. Feel free to research this further on your own.

---

1. Fleming, N.D. (1996). *Teaching and Learning Styles: VARK Strategies*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

Exercise: VARK Learning Styles

1. My preferred learning styles from the VARK model are:

2. I will begin working to strengthen my learning through these other styles:

Cultural Preferences

Some learning preferences are determined by culture and practice. Certain cultures or groups have specific ways of learning that differ from traditional Western practices. Indigenous learning, for example, often uses story-telling to demonstrate concepts. Stories are passed down from generation to generation, using elders to teach the younger ones. Learning in this manner incorporates social aspects, feelings of safety, and a familiarity for Indigenous learners.

Indigenous learning circle. Story-telling is often a cultural preference for Indigenous learners.

Exercise: Cultural or Group Learning Preferences

Think about whether there are certain styles of learning, whether it be because of your culture, race, religion, association, or other group, that has influenced your style of learning. What practices are familiar to you? What practices help you learn better?

Learning preferences come in many forms. Whatever learning model you consider, you should pay attention to what works for you (and what doesn't) and organize your study sessions accordingly.

Text Attributions

- Text under the "What Are Your Learning Preferences" and "VARK Learning Styles" headings is from "How You Learn" in *University Success* by N. Mahoney, B. Klassen, and M. D'Eon. Adapted by Mary Shier. CC BY-NC-SA.

- Text under the "Multiple Intelligences" heading is from "Evaluate Your Learning Skills and Strengths" in *University 101* by Kwantlen Polytechnic University. CC BY-SA. Adapted by Mary Shier. CC BY.

Video Attributions

- Stephen Wiltshire draws NYC for UBS by 4heraldsq. Standard YouTube licence.

Media Attributions

- Multiple Intelligences (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Multiple-intelligence.jpg) © Sajaganesandip is licensed under a CC BY-SA (Attribution ShareAlike) (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license
- Learning Circle © Gordon Shier (https://gordon-shier.tumblr.com/) is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license

2.2 Learning Differences and Challenges

Learning Challenges

Everyone faces challenges in learning at different times and to different degrees. There are many factors that will affect people's ability to learn. Some are circumstantial (e.g. parenting young children) or environmental (e.g. adapting to a new culture) while others are self-inflicted (e.g. consistently staying up too late), and yet others are barriers that are more challenging to deal with (e.g. learning disabilities). Some are perceived (e.g. confidence). Other challenges for students include: fighting addictions, poverty, abuse, unsupportive partners, grief, discrimination, harassment, and chronic health issues. Whatever the challenge, there are strategies to help you through. It's different for everyone, but you are definitely not the only student who is dealing with significant challenges. It's important to identify your own personal learning challenges so that you can identify strategies to overcome them.

Systemic Barriers

Challenges can be inherent in institutions. If things like racism, discrimination, harassment, inclusion, sexual violence, or gender bias are impacting students, they may be struggling with emotional or mental health issues. They may be struggling with feeling safe, feeling respected and valued, being understood, or being accepted. Often students are not aware of how systemic challenges can impede their learning. These kinds of repetitive stressors can cause ongoing problems with memory, retention, and focus.

Most colleges and universities have very well defined policies for discrimination, harassment, and sexual violence. Though the policies exist, it doesn't mean that the practices and procedures line up with the policies. Often people are unaware of how certain practices can enhance discrimination, for example. If you are being impacted by any of these factors, ask about specified contact people in the school to have a private conversation with. You will be able to learn about your rights and options in a confidential setting, and then you can make an informed decision regarding what steps, if any, you choose to take.

Accessibility

The idea of "accessibility" is an important force of change on college campuses today. *Accessibility* is about making education accessible to all, and it's particularly focused on providing educational support to a diverse group of students, faculty, and staff with disabilities. Colleges offer support for those with permanent disabilities (and some temporary disabilities) such as:

- Mobility impairments

- Learning disabilities

- Mental health conditions

- Deafness or hard of hearing

- Visual impairments

- Attention deficit disorder

- Neurological disabilities or head injuries

- Chronic health problems

Accommodations

Those with documented disabilities have special legal rights to certain accommodations. Even those whose disabilities are not diagnosed can receive some accommodations. Accommodations may include, but are not limited to, the following:

Find an accessible path.

- Academic accommodations, like alternate format for print materials, classroom captioning, arranging for priority registration, reducing a course load, substituting one course for another, providing note takers, tutors, recording devices, sign language interpreters, a TTY in your dorm room, and equipping school computers with screen-reading, voice recognition, or other adaptive software or hardware

- Exam accommodations (e.g. extended time on exams)

- Financial support and assistance

- Priority access to housing

- Transportation and access, like wheelchair-accessible community shuttles

Assistive technologies and web-accessibility accommodations are critical in today's technology-driven economy and society. The following are some examples of assistive technologies:

- Software like Dragon Naturally Speaking, Kurzweil, Zoom Text, CCTV Magnifier, Inspiration Software

- Computer input devices, like keyboards, electronic pointing devices, sip-and-puff systems, wands and sticks, joysticks, trackballs, and touch screens

- Other web-accessibility aids, like screen readers, screen enlargers, and screen magnifiers, speech recognition or voice recognition programs, and Text-to-Speech (TTS) or speech synthesizers
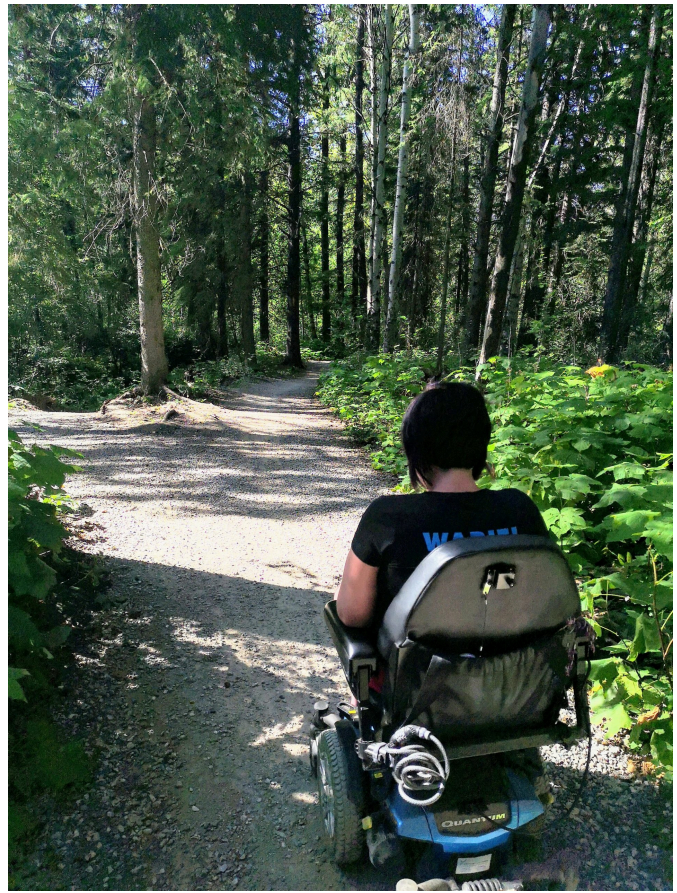
Students in the following video share some of their experiences with the web accessibility.

Video: "Experiences of Students with Disabilities" (length 1:59)

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://opentextbc.ca/studentsuccess/?p=72#oembed-1 (#oembed-1)

For more information about web accessibility, visit WebAIM (Web Accessibility In Mind) (http://webaim.org/).

See the Supporting Students with Disabilities in B.C. Postsecondary Course (https://sswd.jibc.ca/courses/sswd/) website.

Most colleges and universities have *accessibility coordinators* (formerly called disability coordinators). If you know or suspect that you have a learning disability or if you have had significant learning challenges in the past, it would be a good idea to make an appointment with the accessibility coordinator in your institution. It's best to do this well ahead of starting your program. Often it takes time to do assessments, apply for funding, apply for adaptive equipment or resources, and to develop an educational strategy that will work for you. Of course, you can make an appointment at any time in your program, but sooner rather than later is always a good plan.

Key Takeaways

Facing learning differences and challenges include:

- Recognizing the factors that could impact your ability to succeed in school.
- Identifying and implementing strategies that will help to overcome those challenges.
- Accessing Student Services and contacting the Accessibility Coordinator if you have a disability.
- Recognizing that colleges and universities have many supports available for people with disabilities.

Exercise: Learning Differences and Challenges

Think about the challenges discussed in this chapter, and brainstorm others that may impact you.

1. Identify the factors that you feel may impact your ability to be successful in college.
2. In what ways could they impact you?
3. What are some steps you can take to address these challenges?

Text Attributions

- Text under the "Accessibility" and "Accommodations" headings has been adapted from "Diversity and Accessibility" in *Blueprint for Success in College and Career* by Lumen Learning, Linda (Bruce) Hill, and Dave Dillon. Adapted by Mary Shier. CC BY.

Video Attributions

- "Experiences of Students with Disabilities" by Jared Smith. Standard YouTube Licence.

Media Attributions

- Usability Accessibility Successful (https://www.flickr.com/photos/jalbertbowdenii/8703333617) © J. Albert Bowden II is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license

2.3 Examine Applicable Strategies

It's good to understand learning styles, however just knowing your preference, however, doesn't automatically provide a solution for how to do your best in your courses. For example, although you may be a kinesthetic learner, you'll likely still have textbook assignments (reading) as well as lecture classes (listening). All students need to adapt to other ways of learning.

The following sections look at the key ways in which learning occurs in college classes and offer some suggestions about how to adapt your strengths for success.

Reading

Reading skills are critically important for adult students. Most classes involve reading assignments. Although many instructors may cover some of the textbook's content in lectures or class discussions, students cannot skip the reading assignments and expect to do well.

If your personal learning preference is linguistic and independent—that is, if you learn well by sitting alone and reading—then you will likely not have difficulty with your university reading. Here are some tips to help maximize your learning:

- Underline and highlight key ideas when reading.
- Take good notes on your reading, using your own words.
- Write descriptions that summarize information presented in nonverbal modes, such as through charts and graphs.
- Do all optional and supplemental readings.
- Take good notes in class, as you may remember more from your written words than from the instructor's spoken words.
- If a class involves significant non-reading learning, such as learning hands-on physical processes, study with other students who are kinesthetic or "doing" learners.

If you have a different learning style, then you may need to give more attention to your reading skills. Always allow plenty of time for reading assignments—rushing makes it harder to understand what you are reading. Do your reading at times of the day when you are most alert. Find a quiet, comfortable place conducive to reading.

Try also to maximize your learning through your personal preference. If you learn better by listening, for example, sit up front in lecture classes where you can see and hear the instructor better. If needed, ask if you can record an instructor's lectures and then listen again at a convenient time, such as when commuting to class or work, or while doing the laundry. If you are more of a visual learner, sit in class where you can see PowerPoint slides and other visual presentations most clearly. Use a visual approach in your class notes, as described in Module 5.6 "Study Skills: Note-Taking." (#chapter-note-taking)

Check out whether video podcasts may be available for reviewing lectures. Try to relate all of these visual images to the textbook's content when you're reading an assignment. In addition, pay special attention to illustrations and diagrams in the book, which will further help you understand the written ideas and information. If you are more of an interpersonal learner, form a study group with other students and talk with others about the course topics. Take advantage of your instructors' office hours to help clarify your understanding after reading assignments.

Listening

Many college classes involve lectures.

Listening skills are as important as reading skills. Students are expected to listen to their instructors in class and remember and understand what is said. In discussion classes, listening is important also for participating well in discussions.

If you favour listening, then you may already be good at understanding class lectures. Chapter 5 "Study Skills" (#part-study-skills-2) provides tips to help you pay close attention, take good notes, and recall the information and ideas you have heard. Here are some more tips:

- Sit where you can best hear the instructor, away from other distractions.

- Study with other students and listen to what they say about the course material. Hearing them talk from their class notes may be more helpful than reviewing your own written notes.

- Record lectures and listen to them again later when reviewing material before a test.

- When studying, read your notes aloud. Review previous tests by reading the questions aloud and speaking your answers. If a section in your textbook seems confusing, read it aloud.

Instructors often use visual aids to help explain concepts and ideas. This helps students with visual learning styles.

- Talk with your instructor if you feel you are not understanding course readings.

- Use rhymes or acronyms to recall verbal information.

- Explore supplemental learning aids, such as audio and video podcasts (e.g. from Ted Talks or even from other educational institutions) on the course's subject matter.

Seeing

A "seeing" learner learns more effectively through seeing than through reading or listening. Some courses include demonstrations and physical processes that can be observed. If you are a visual learner, work on developing your reading and listening skills, too, because you will need to learn in these ways as well. Here are some tips to improve learning related to seeing:

- Pay special attention in class to visual presentations, such as charts, diagrams, and images.

- Take lecture notes using a visual approach. Do the same when taking notes on class readings. Use diagrams, different colours, lists, and sketches to help you remember.

- Use video podcasts or other visual aids for reviewing lectures.

- Pay special attention to your textbooks' illustrations and diagrams.

- If your instructor or textbook uses few visuals to help you understand and recall information and ideas, try to imagine how you would present this information visually to others if you were giving a class presentation. In your notes, create sketches for a PowerPoint slideshow capturing the highlights of the material.

- Study with other students who may learn better by reading or listening, and watch how they explain the material.

Doing

People who learn best by doing are often attracted to careers with a strong physical or hands-on component, which can vary from athletics to technologies and trades. But these students may need to use other learning skills as well. Here are some tips to help maximize your learning related to doing:

- Try to engage all your senses when learning. Even when reading about something, try to imagine what it would feel like if you touched it, how it might smell, how you could physically manipulate it, and so forth.

- Think about how you yourself would teach the topic you are presently learning. What visuals could you make to demonstrate the idea or information? Imagine a class lecture as a train of boxcars and think about what things you would put in those cars to represent the lecture topics.

- When it becomes difficult to concentrate when reading while sitting in a quiet place, get up and move around while studying; make gestures as you read aloud.

- Use your hands to create a range of study aids rather than just taking notes: make charts, posters, flash cards, and so on.

Trades – learning by doing

- When taking notes, sketch familiar shapes around words and phrases to help you remember them. Try to associate abstract ideas with concrete examples.

- The act of writing—handwriting more than typing at a keyboard—may increase retention; write key things several times.

- Study with other students who may learn better by reading or listening.

Feeling

Feeling learners focus on the emotional side of information and learn through personal connections. Too often they may feel that a textbook or a class is "dry" or "boring" if it focuses exclusively on written information. In addition to improving their reading and listening skills, students with this style can enrich their learning by focusing on what they and others feel about the information and ideas being learned. Here are some tips to help maximize your learning related to feeling:

- Try to establish an emotional connection with the topic you are learning. In a history class, for example, imagine yourself as someone living in the period you are studying: what would you feel about the forces at work in your life? In a science class, think about what the implications of a particular scientific principle or discovery might mean for you as a person or how you yourself might have felt if you had been the scientist making that discovery.

- Talk with your instructor during office hours. Express your enthusiasm and share your

feelings about the subject. Even instructors who may seem "dry" in a lecture class often share their feelings toward their subject in conversation.

- Do supplemental reading about the people involved in a subject you're studying. For example, reading an online biographical sketch of a historical figure, scientist, or theorist may open your eyes to a side of the subject you hadn't seen before and increase your learning.

- Study with other students who may learn better by reading or listening. Talk with them in a personal way about what the material means to them. Try teaching them about the topic while explaining your feelings about it.

- Also try the strategies listed for the "doing" learning style.

Your Style, Your Instructor's Style

Many classes tend to be taught using certain learning styles. Instructors in large lecture classes, for example, generally emphasize listening carefully and reading well. Don't worry, however, if these are not your particular strengths, for much of this book focuses on learning study skills. Take responsibility for your own learning, rather than expecting the instructor to help you through the subject in your own personal way. For example, if your strength is as a visual learner but your instructor simply stands at a podium and lectures, then provide your own visual stimulation by sketching concept maps in your notes or by visualizing how information being presented might look in a pie chart or graph.

As you move further into your curriculum, you will likely have more small classes with class discussions, demonstrations, group presentations, and other learning activities. Once you are in classes closely related to a career path that interests you, you will find your personal style more relevant to the kinds of material you will be learning.

Much learning in college and university also comes from interactions with others, who often have different learning preferences. Be open to interacting with other students and instructors who are different from you, and you will find yourself learning in ways that may be new to you.

> ### Exercise: Learning Preferences
>
> 1. How would you describe your personal learning style preference?
> 2. Name an activity from which you generally learn very well.
> 3. Name a type of learning experience you may have difficulty with.
> 4. For the activity above, list at least two strategies you can use to improve your learning effectiveness when in that situation next time.
> 5. If you experience a situation in which your personal learning style preference seems to clash hopelessly with an instructor's teaching style, what is your best course of action?

a. Ask the instructor to teach in a different way.

b. Drop the class.

c. Adapt your style or study with other students.

d. Complain to the dean.

6. Explain your answer to question 5.

Text Attributions

- This chapter was adapted from "How You Learn" in *University Success* by N. Mahoney, B. Klassen, and M. D'Eon. Adapted by Mary Shier. CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 Licence.

Media Attributions

- An Instructor Lectures (https://ukblacktech.com/stockphotos/) © UKBlackTech is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license
- Whiteboard Diagram (https://www.flickr.com/photos/wocintechchat/25720964030/in/album-72157664006621903/) © WOCinTech Chat. Microsoft NYC (https://www.flickr.com/photos/wocintechchat/) is licensed under a CC BY (Attribution) (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license

2.4 Chapter Review and Activities

This chapter dealt with the fact that all learners are facing different situations in learning. Some seem to learn easily – immediately grasping new concepts – while others have to work extremely hard to get good grades, and others seem to struggle regardless. This chapter examines the reasons that there are differences in learning, including learner strengths, preferences, challenges, circumstances, or learning disabilities.

Once learners recognize their own strengths and challenges, they can accommodate them by using different strategies.

Key Takeaways

- Using different learning style models such as VARK can help identify your unique style of learning.
- People have natural learning preferences, affecting how they learn best, such as learning by reading, by listening, by seeing, by doing, and by feeling.
- Indigenous learners often have their own learning preferences and unique ways of learning. Culture and group associations can impact learning preferences because of practice and familiarity.
- You can use learning strengths to enhance your study strategies.
- Students should learn how to use their preferred learning style to their best advantage while also becoming flexible and working to develop other learning styles.
- There are numerous ways to be "smart". The traditional book smart model is not the only kind of smart. The Multiple Intelligences model describes 9 different types of smart.
- Because your learning style preference may not match your instructor's teaching style, you need to be flexible and work to develop new learning strategies essential for student success.
- Using a variety of modalities to learn will strengthen learning, understanding, and memory.

Exercise: Learning Experiences

Summarize what you have learned about your own learning preferences and challenges. In light of these, what are some things you can do to make your learning experience more successful?