

Learning to Learn

The ability to learn is a skill but not one that is notably heavily invested in. Being able to seek out, absorb and most importantly utilise new found skills, knowledge and understanding is surely a foundation to all development, no matter the subject.

How many times have you attended a training course to find the flow of information isn't really working for you, or re-read the same paragraph in a book time and time again and still made little sense of it, or found that no matter how hard you try you just can't quite master the basics in a foreign language?

Part of this is down to your personal learning style and preferences, part of it is down to the filters that you apply when you learn something new, part of it is the expectation that you or others set upon yourself, but part of it can also be the fact that we've forgotten how to learn. With a

myriad of ways in which we can harness and assimilate information, it is no wonder that what worked for us in the classroom in our earlier years may elude us in the workplace today.

Where traditionally learning was largely done independently, there is a massive social movement in the learning space now and collaborative learning, either physically or virtually, with known fellow students or complete strangers who are undergoing a similar journey, plays a significant role in the way we instinctively learn today.

In addition, it may help if we understand why we want to learn. Some learn for learning's sake; i.e. their motivation lies within having new found knowledge. Others learn in order that they achieve goals and others still learn in order to be social or part of a group that is learning together.

Take a moment to reflect on your learning ability, your preferences, your motivation. If you'd like to learn more about learning to learn, the Open University run a free online course which you can access via this link.



<http://www.open.edu/openlearn/education/learning-learn-you-and-your-learning/content-section-0>

Learning trends

This article is inspired by the report that the Open University published earlier this year, Trends in Learning 2017. You can access the full report by following this link.



<http://info1.open.ac.uk/employers>

Our learning preferences in work are becoming increasingly aligned with our learning preferences outside of work and this year's report identified a number of trends that support that. Once again, technology plays a key part in learning with the focus this year on social media as a learning platform. Not only does **learning through social media** fuel our desire to always be connected but it supports another key learning preference, that of collaboration. In **learning from the crowd** (be it through technology or not) we find ourselves being more innovative and creative and we want to keep up with or indeed ahead of the pack. **Formative Analytics** turns post learning analytics on its head and now learners can see how their learning journey compares with others who are learning and then help direct that learner to specific, tailor made activity to further their learning.



Our approaches to learning are also evolving. Best practice from technical disciplines is increasingly evidenced in workplace learning, for example **Design Thinking**. Thinking processes commonly used by designers can help people come together, follow a solution focussed pathway and learn as they go. Similarly **Productive Failure** is usually centred on collaborative learning where freedom to solve a complex issue is granted before then teaching the principles and methods to solve it. As our understanding of the brain and its associated sciences (neuro science, cognitive and social sciences) progress so too does our desire to develop our capacity to learn, unlearn and relearn. **Learning for the future** recognises that knowledge and skills date quickly – to stay ahead we have to be agile and adaptable.

Learning styles: visual, auditory & kinaesthetic

We receive information through three main senses: what we see, hear and experience physically (movement, emotions). There are real benefits when we can be specific in giving evidence of outcomes in all three ways. Are you aware of your natural preferences? Those of your colleagues and stakeholders?

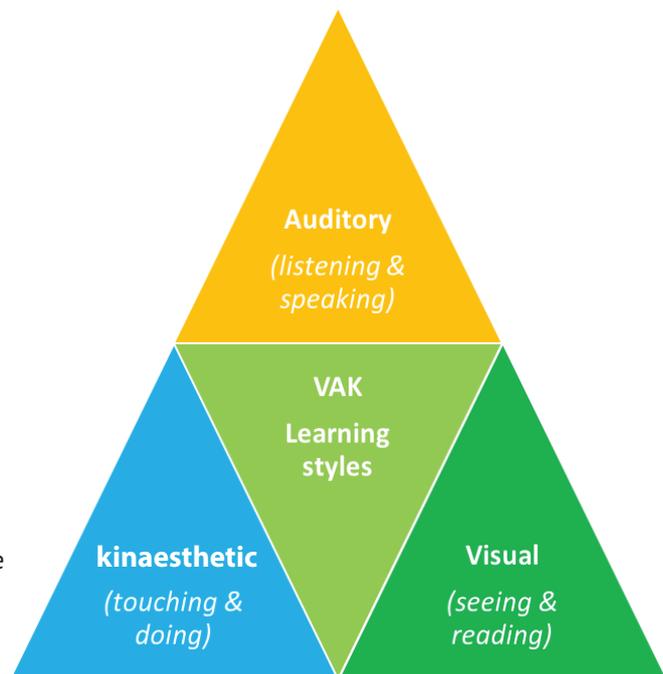
What is the VAK Learning Styles Model?

Developed by Richard Bandler, John Grinder and others within the NLP (neuro linguistic programming) research, the VAK Learning Styles Model was originally developed by psychologists in the 1920s. It turns out that most of us prefer to learn in one of three ways: visual, auditory or kinesthetic, although, in practice, we generally 'mix and match'.

Visual: a 'visual learner' absorbs and retains information better when it is presented in, for example, pictures, diagrams and charts. They recall and create images in their mind and connect ideas visually. This is the fastest method for processing or communicating ideas and those with other preferences have often learned to be visual thinkers to some extent. Watch for people who respond well to visuals, some of us can't do without them!

Auditory: an 'auditory learner' prefers listening to what is being presented. He or she responds best to voices, for example, in a lecture or group discussion. Hearing his own voice repeating something back to a tutor or trainer is also helpful. We may talk to ourselves in our heads as a way of processing information. Listen to what they say and how they say it for evidence of buy-in.

Kinaesthetic: a 'kinaesthetic learner' prefers a physical experience, responding to feelings in the body, such as movement, temperature, pressure and emotion. She or he likes a 'hands-on' approach and responds well to being able to touch or feel an object or learning prop. Watch body language for evidence of buy-in. Taste and smell often seem to be less significant in general mental processing.



Questions to consider

Which method do you prefer?

Which method do your key stakeholders prefer?

How could you tailor your communication delivery and materials to meet the needs of different learning styles?

Visual	Auditory	Kinaesthetic
Visual thinkers will tend to use and respond to terms such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ I get the picture ■ I see that now ■ From my perspective ■ What's your view? 	Auditory thinkers will tend to use and respond to terms such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ I get the message ■ That rings a bell ■ That strikes a chord ■ Sounds OK to me 	Kinaesthetic thinkers will tend to use & respond to terms such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How does that grab you? ■ A grasp of the basics ■ It certainly feels right ■ can relate to that
You could sketch a diagram for visual thinkers	You could stress key words for auditory thinkers	You could use a 'hands-on' approach for kinaesthetic thinkers
Use diagrams, charts, pictures	Use stories, anecdotes, jokes, puns	Include activities and the opportunity to move about

Find out more



http://www.brainboxx.co.uk/a3_aspects/pages/VAK.htm or <https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/vak-learning-styles.htm>



Test yourself – try http://www.brainboxx.co.uk/a3_aspects/pages/VAK.htm, <http://www.businessballs.com/vaklearningstylestest.htm> or <http://www.vaknlp.com/vak.htm>