

Understanding Diverse Learning Styles

You may have already discovered that some instructional styles are more suitable to your learning style than others. Many instructors intentionally diversify their curriculum and coursework to accommodate the different types of learning styles within their respective classes. This is a great lesson for student leaders who are working with various groups of people who also have preferred ways of learning.

Perception and Process

Learning is a two phase process—we first *perceive* the information presented and then we *process* through our own personal filters in an effort to understand and own the information. And, different learning styles perceive and process information differently.

Kolb's Four Learning Styles

In 1985 David Kolb created the Learning Style Inventory (LSI), a simple test that measures the self-identified strengths and weaknesses of a learner. The learning theory involves various preferred learning modes that, when combined, result in four different learning styles:

- **The Diverger**—Prefers to learn through instruction or hands-on exploration supported by reflection, feedback, and conversation.
- **The Converger**—Prefers to learn information that has a practical use and learns best through instructional methods such as guest speakers and simulations.
- **The Accommodator**—Prefers learning through hands-on, active experiences, and the more the merrier—role-playing, debates, and presentations are favored.

Take some time
to keep in Mind ...

...to not use your own learning style as an excuse. You have a preferred learning style, but that doesn't mean you can't learn in other ways. You will become a stronger student if you challenge yourself to learn beyond your comfort zone.

What's My Learning Style?

Curious about your own preferences when it comes to learning? Want to learn more about how you learn best and how you can enhance your learning methods? Visit your career services or academic support office. They are sure to have some survey options that will help you learn how you learn!

- **The Assimilator**—Prefers a cognitive approach to learning as a “thinker” more than a “doer.” Serious learners, they avoid playful activities but rather prefer a good book and a quality lecture.

Seeing, Hearing and Moving: The VAK System

Make an effort to diversify your presentation styles and program offerings to accommodate the three types of common learning styles:

- Visual Learning – SEEING
- Auditory Learning – HEARING
- Kinesthetic Learning – MOVEMENT

For example, let's say you are serving as a Resident Assistant and discussing the policies and procedures for hall living. How can you accommodate the needs of each of the learning styles? Consider providing a typed list of rules to meet the needs of visual learners. To best inform the auditory learners talk through the list and discuss why these rules are essential and beneficial. And, for the kinesthetic learner, provide paper for them to take notes on what they remember and why.

Take some time to consider how you might accommodate various learning styles within your student leadership life when you are:

- Conducting a group meeting
- Facilitating a training workshop
- Presenting a topic
- Planning a program