



English and different types learners



Adapt your lesson for the different learning styles of your students

When we are teaching English to children we need to be aware of the differences in learning styles of the students so that we can incorporate all of their learning styles into the lesson.

Being able to identify which types of learners our students are will help to ensure that they learn effectively and are not excluded from the learning process.

The information below is designed to help you plan activities that will include the main learner types. This is not an exhaustive list; recent research shows that there may be more learning styles than those mentioned here. It may not be possible to include every learning style in every lesson, but we can try to include them all over the course of a number of lessons. It is important therefore to use different activities for each new language lesson, using the same vocabulary or language but in different ways.

The three most commonly recognised learning styles are Visual (seeing), Audio (hearing) and Tactile or Kinesthetic (doing).

Visual Learners



If you are a visual learner, you learn by reading or seeing pictures. You understand and remember things by sight. You can picture what you are learning in your head, and you learn best by using methods that are primarily visual. You like to see what you are learning.

As a visual learner, you are usually neat and clean. You often close your eyes to visualize or remember something, and you will find something to watch if you become bored. You may have difficulty with spoken directions and may be easily distracted by sounds. You are attracted to colour and to spoken language (like stories) that is rich in imagery.

Here are some things that you can do to help visual learners to learn better:

- Sit near the front of the classroom. (It does not mean that they are the “teacher's pet”!)
- Use flashcards to learn new words.
- Write down key words, ideas, or instructions.
- Draw pictures to help explain new concepts and then explain the pictures.
- Colour code things.
- Avoid distractions during study times.

For English Lessons, visual learners respond well to:

- information on the board
- flashcards
- colourful pictures
- videos
- story books with pictures
- computer graphics
- maps (e.g. treasure maps)
- cartoons
- board games and puzzles
- worksheets



Auditory Learners

If you are an auditory learner, you learn by hearing and listening. You understand and remember things you have heard. You store information by the way it sounds, and you have an easier time understanding spoken instructions than written ones. You often learn by reading out loud because you have to hear it or speak it in order to know it.

As an auditory learner, you probably hum or talk to yourself or others if you become bored. You may tip your head on one side when talking to someone. People may think you are not paying attention, even though you may be hearing and understanding everything that is said.

Here are some things that auditory learners can do in order to learn better:

- Sit where it is possible to hear easily
- Use flashcards to learn new words; read them out loud (*haute voix*)
- Read stories or instructions out loud.
- Make a recording of spelling words and listen to the recording.
- Read test questions out loud.
- Study new material by reading it out loud.

Auditory learners learn best by listening. They work well with spoken instructions and learn quickly by listening to stories and songs. They do not need to see the written words in order to learn.

For English lessons, auditory learners respond well to:

- songs
- Listening activities, listening to stories
- poems and riddles (*devinette*)
- verbal instructions and explanations
- repeating things
- participating in oral activities

As audio learners tune in to sounds, try and provide as many opportunities to have sound and noise added to your lesson. Songs are an obvious source and encourage your learners to listen and sing along. Using stories in lessons is something all kids love. There are lots of simple stories available but you can also make up your own stories to correspond with the subject of your lesson (remember to add pictures for your visual learners).

Some ideas: Teach animal noises with animal vocabulary. For transport, make the sounds of cars, airplanes, etc. You'll be surprised at the amount of sounds you can teach! Concentrate on pronunciation of sounds as well, from the letters of the alphabet to words and sentences – your audio learners will really pick up on this if you provide the opportunity. Do listening exercises which require the children to listen to your instructions in order to complete a task. Create activities for pairs or groups to work together so that your students can talk and listen to each other to complete the tasks.

Tactile Learners

If you are a tactile learner, you learn by touching and doing. You understand and remember things through physical movement. You prefer to touch, move, build, or draw what you learn. You learn better when some type of physical activity is involved. You need to be active and take frequent breaks. You often speak with your hands and with gestures and you may have difficulty sitting still.





As a tactile learner, you like to take things apart and put things together, and you tend to find reasons to tinker (bidouiller) or move around when you become bored. You may be very well coordinated and have good athletic ability. You can easily remember things that were done but can have difficulty remembering what you saw or heard. You often communicate by touching, and you appreciate physically expressed forms of encouragement, such as a pat (touche) on the back.

Here are some things that tactile learners can do in order to learn better:

- Activities that involve touching, building, moving, or drawing.
- Do lots of activities like completing art projects, taking walks, or acting out stories.
- Chew gum, walk around, or rock in a chair while reading or studying.
- Arrange flashcards in groups to show the relationships between ideas.
- Trace words with a finger to learn spelling (finger spelling).
- Take frequent breaks during reading or studying periods (frequent, but not long).
- It's OK to tap a pencil, shake your foot, or hold on to something while learning.
- Use a computer to reinforce learning through the sense of touch.



For English lessons, tactile learners respond well to:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • drawing • songs with gestures • playing board games • making models (<i>pate a modeller, lego</i>) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • craft activities (<i>bricolage</i>) • feeling activities like "object in the bag" • following instructions to make things |
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Tactile learners need to feel and touch – without this they cannot retain new vocabulary easily.

Let them touch and feel everything! When using flashcards, pass them around the class so that the tactile learners can feel them. You will see the tactile learners really come to life at this point. Have lots of objects available to teach new vocabulary (cars, food containers, plastic fruit, animal toys, building, coloured paper, etc, and when you teach new words permit your students to touch and play with the objects.

Use puppets (*marionettes*) for role playing (dialogs) and permit your students to touch, cuddle and use the puppet. Try to create activities that involve the sense of physical touch, for example, place an object in a bag and ask the children to feel and guess what it is, use blindfolds (*bandeau*) and ask the children to feel an object or to find their way around the classroom. Have them draw a scene that includes new vocabulary or build or make something with lego or play doh. Making things is a good way to teach and reinforce new vocabulary.

For English, tactile learners respond well to:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • songs with gestures • playing games in which they need to use their whole body (e.g. Charades) • doing exercise type activities which require running and jumping | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • movement activities • making models (e.g. with play doh or • following instructions to make something |
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Have lots of gestures to use with songs and let them act out new vocabulary, for example teach "horse" and let your students run around like a horse, teach "eat breakfast" and have them pretending to eat cereal, etc.

If a child wants to roll around on the floor like a ball when you are teaching the word ball, let him!



Analytic Learners

Analytic learners focus on the details of language, such as grammar rules, and enjoy taking apart words and sentences. Analytic learners respond well to:

- well-structured and clear lessons
- information and instructions given in steps
- clearly stated goals and objectives of tasks
- activities which require thought, matching exercises, puzzles, missing letters, etc.



Your analytic learners will enjoy activities and tasks where they need to think and work on the specifics of the language. Play games like concentration with flashcards when learning new vocabulary, do worksheets with matching and word scramble activities. Play games on the whiteboard where student have to guess the missing letters of a word (hangman is a great choice). Give out alphabet letter blocks and have your students put the letters in alphabetical order and make words. When giving instructions, always take care to be clear and give step-by-step details.

Global Learners

Global learners focus on the whole picture and do not care so much about specific details. They do not want to get bored with slow moving lessons and enjoy interesting and attractive materials. Global learners respond well to:

- games
- group activities
- story writing
- lots of action based activities
- talking without being interrupted for correction

Make sure to include lots of fun games and activities for your global learners where the language learning objective is not so forced or obvious. Let them play with the objects or write stories simply for the fun of doing them (although they are still learning they won't realize it). Get them working in pairs or groups to complete tasks and let them move around the class as they do their activity.

Conclusion

This is just an introduction to learning styles. There are a lot of different styles. The key is to include different styles at different points of the lesson. You may have read the above and thought "How on earth do I include all of these different learning styles in all of my teaching points and activities?" Here is an example. When you teach some new words use flashcards:

1. Get all of the kids to listen to you and say the words clearly with associated noises (Visual/Auditory)
2. Have the children run around acting out the words (Tactile Active)
3. Do a feel in the bag activity to guess the objects (Tactile Feeling)
4. Put the children into teams and ask them to create models of the objects (Global)
5. Finally have a worksheet activity where students need do matching or guessing activities (Analytic).

You don't have to include all learning styles for each teaching point, but try to include a variety of styles throughout the lesson so all of your students get catered for at some point. You may need to consider adapting your lesson if you notice that a child is having trouble understanding or losing interest.

Having a wide variety of styles included in your lesson will really help your students understand.