

THE FOUR STYLES OF LEARNING

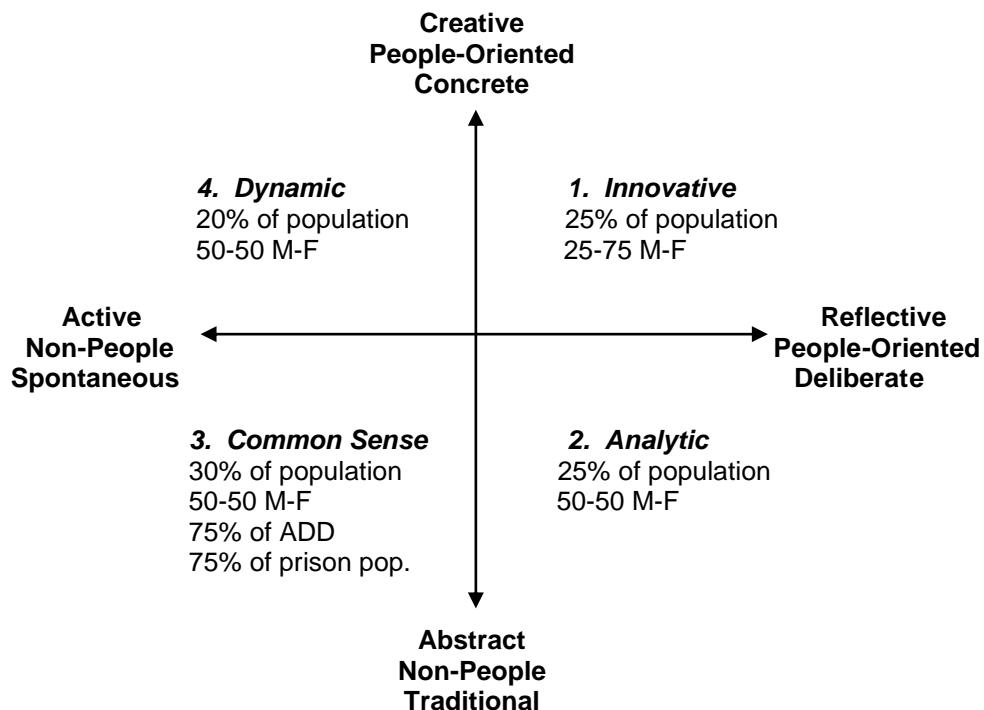
Adapted from
LEARNING STYLES
by Marlene Lefever (out of print)¹

This is provided to help you identify your students' learning styles, and your own. Why? We want to help you teach your students in a way that best helps them learn the material.

A learning style is the style in which we see or perceive things best, and the way in which we process what we have seen. We acquire our learning style by heredity, by our past experiences, and by our current working environment. Learning styles vary with age and by sex. Men tend to become more affable and mellow with age, while women tend to become more assertive and less flexible.

There are 4 primary learning styles but only one will be our dominant style. Even so, each of us has some attributes of each. The styles combine to form a learning matrix with two distinct lines of approach. There is continuum from the concrete (how it affects people they know) to the abstract, and another from the active to the reflective. These same continuums flow from people-oriented (relationships) to non-people (self-sufficient), from spontaneous to deliberate, and from creative to traditional. These continuums define the four quadrants of learning:

Four Quadrants of Learning



¹ See Marlene's newer book: Creative Teaching Methods (1997). See also Howard Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives* (Multnomah, 1987, 2003).

For example, Barnabas was people-oriented, introducing Paul to the church at Antioch. Paul was Analytic, but sometimes hard to understand. Peter was more common sense, having little patience with word-games. John was dynamic, seeing the big picture.

Each of the four styles has its own characteristics, or you might say “group needs.” When you teach a class, try to meet the needs of each group during the class. Then, every 2 weeks or so, try to emphasize a different style. If you fail to meet the needs of a particular group, you will lose that group from your class. An analytic teacher who is locked into his own learning style will force all but the analytic learners (and a few common-sensers) from his or her class. Analytic learners must have a lecture. They are less able to adjust to other styles. A common-sense learner, on the other hand, can adapt to an analytic style of teaching.

Those who are people-oriented want a lot of social time and personal touch. Those who are not people-oriented hate breaking up into small groups and dislike hugs. Recognize the needs of the people you are serving. A common-sense teacher who is making notes on the board when an innovative learner walks into the class, may turn around and say, “hi” and then go back to finishing his notes; but the learner wanted to be greeted and talked to and may leave the class to find one with a more people-oriented teacher. While members of each group tend to marry someone from a diagonal group, they *absolutely hate to have a teacher from that diagonal group!* Therefore, camouflage your own dominant group by meeting the needs of each of the other groups. In a marriage, don’t try to teach your spouse - just listen and encourage.

Here are the primary characteristics of each learning style:

1. INNOVATIVE - GOVERNED BY THEIR HEART

very loving, sociable, both listen *and* share, in tune with their feelings, know who they are, enjoy a colorful atmosphere, accept loss, must trust you before listening to you, prefer to get along rather than be right and therefore seldom enforce rules, slow decision makers if they can make them at all (they over-empathize so they make poor referees), supportive, sympathetic, agreeable, need to know the reason why, need to be touched, sensitive, start with what they already know and see before they can move to new information.

Weaknesses: pliable, dependent, will do anything to be loved, can be sloppy

Classroom style: **enjoy** small group interaction, mimes, art, brain-storming, role-play, team sports, stimulation, using what they already know and building on it, want to know about things that directly affect the lives of those around them. **Do not enjoy** timed tests, debates (lead to arguments and hurt feelings), computer assisted education (too impersonal), lack of fine arts, common-sense teachers.

Theme song: “What the World needs now is Love, Pure Love”

2. ANALYTICAL - GOVERNED BY THEIR HEAD

very wise, prefer just the facts, like the bottom line, tend to see the trees instead of the forest, detail oriented, take lots of notes, carry calculators with them, over-achievers, need recognition for their work (or they believe they have wasted their time which they hate), detached, one thing at a time, planners, good in school, logical, like facts for their own sake, collectors of information, prefer to work alone, don’t like to be called on if they don’t

know the answer, perfectionists, theoretical, have a taste for the complex, information givers and instruction managers, inquiring minds, a penny saved is a penny earned.

Weaknesses: picky-picky, hate noise (distracting), severe, critical, moralistic, hate things out of sequence (alphabetize boxes and cans on a shelf)

Classroom style: **enjoy** programmed instruction, well-organized lectures, stories that clarify the abstract instruction, competition, demonstrations, objective tests. Share facts the student needs to know, let them build models and concepts, do not correct them in class. **Do not enjoy** role-play, open discussion, group projects (perfectionist abhors dependence), teachers who don't stay on the task, dynamic teachers.

Theme Song: "ABCDEFG"

3. COMMON SENSE - GOVERNED BY THEIR HANDS

very just, live in the here and now, love to test you, tend to see things in black and white (unlike the grays of the innovative), practical and pragmatic, no thought for tomorrow, all or nothing in their drive, enjoy individual rather than team sports, love gadgets, use what they know (unlike the theory of the analytic), hyperactive, loners, realistic, goal-oriented, want to know how things work (tend to disassemble things to find out), impulsive (acting before thinking), love problem-solving, love debates, love to challenge, tend to dislike touching unless raised in a touching home, good with their hands, always want to know how to use it or do it, tend to be manipulative and controlling, have no patience for others' opinions (they already know what will work).

Weaknesses: street fighters (win at any cost), show up late, would rather fail than do it your way, procrastinators.

Classroom style: **enjoy** problem-solving, debates, logic problems, independent study (to avoid interacting with other students), experiments (to work with hands). Challenge them to check out if what they know is valid. They want to know how things work, and practical application in real life. They are sometimes mislabeled hyperactive because of their energy and lack of patience with others. **Do not enjoy** memorizing, reading most of the time, group work, writing assignments, innovative teachers.

Theme song: "Don't talk... show me!" (My Fair Lady)

4. DYNAMIC - GOVERNED BY THEIR SPIRIT

courageous, encouraging, born leaders, visionaries, survivors (pursue potential), endurance packed, need a challenge, hate routine and structure, charge ahead (ready, aim, fire!), stay busy, love spectator sports, vivid imaginations, never met a stranger, creative, insightful, curious, enjoy facts for their potential to stimulate their imagination (unlike the analytic who enjoys them for their own sake), like to explore all possibilities, like options to choose from (don't back them into a corner with only one way out), they like to do it their own way, facilitators and stimulators, catalysts for change.

Weaknesses: ego-centric, undisciplined, pushy, messy

Classroom style: **enjoy** case-studies, guided imagery, dramatics, producing creative products, assignments requiring originality. Help this student explore the possibilities of what is known. **Do not enjoy** seating charts (too restrictive - no exploring),

assignments without options (they like choice so they can say it was their own), standard routine, activities done in haste (no time to imagine), analytic teachers.

Theme song: “I Did It My Way”

What might those styles look like in a practical situation?

Say you tell a team having these four styles of learning, that you've found a powerful fuel. You believe that if it's contained and directed properly, it can produce a stream of gaseous exhaust that could push a load of several thousand pounds a very long way.

The DYNAMIC blurts out, “We should go to the moon!”

The COMMON-SENDER brags, “I can build the rocket that will get us there!”

The ANALYTIC claims, “I'll ensure we don't overlook any details!”

The INNOVATIVE orders donuts and coffee, exclaiming, “This is gonna be fun!”

IDENTIFYING LEARNING STYLES

After reading each description, mark each option **on a scale of 1-3** where 1 is very little like me, 2 is something like me, and 3 is very much like me. Add up all the a's, b's, c's and d's separately. The highest score is your dominant style where "a" is innovative, "b" is analytic, "c" is common sense, and "d" is dynamic. The lowest scores for a style describe the students whose needs I am least likely to meet, or least likely to understand.

	Score
I do my best work:	
a. when I'm with other people	_____
b. alone, gathering information from books or other sources	_____
c. analyzing how something works or fixing something so it does work	_____
d. brainstorming new ideas, or trying new and daring things others wouldn't try	_____
I like to work:	
a. in a colorful working environment	_____
b. at a desk or table	_____
c. with my hands as well as my mind	_____
d. with new ideas, making intuitive guesses on what works	_____
When solving problems, I like to:	
a. give essay-type answers rather than fill-in the blank	_____
b. find the right answer rather than the best available answer	_____
c. test my own solutions and prove I'm right	_____
d. make guesses or follow hunches	_____
When I'm with others, I see myself as:	
a. a friend by helping and understanding them	_____
b. an information giver and organizer	_____
c. a trainer, helping others do what needs to be done	_____
d. a facilitator or idea-stimulator for them	_____
The worst thing that could happen in my class is the students:	
a. don't get along with each other - or with me	_____
b. don't learn the facts they're given	_____
c. don't know how to apply what they've learned	_____
d. don't know how to use what they know to make the world a better place	_____
People tend to describe me as:	
a. a really nice person	_____
b. a really smart person	_____
c. a hard worker and results-oriented	_____
d. a highly creative person	_____
In a disagreement I am most likely to:	
a. accept the other person's point of view or walk away diplomatically	_____
b. point out the errors in the other person's point of view	_____
c. do anything I can to win because I'm sure my solution will work	_____
d. show the other person where their line of reasoning will lead	_____
When I'm given an assignment, I prefer:	
a. to work with a team or a partner and do something I can act out	_____
b. to work alone and gather all the facts before I begin writing a paper	_____
c. to work alone doing something I can test or demonstrate	_____
d. to choose the assignment and how it will be done	_____

When I have a choice on how to present my ideas, I like to:

- a. do it as a skit or drama that everyone will enjoy _____
- b. lecture with prepared notes, graphs and charts _____
- c. do it as a debate so I can prove why my ideas will work _____
- d. create exciting displays and use them to dream-build with the audience _____

Part of my self-identity is wrapped-up in:

- a. the number of friends I have and the strength of those relationships _____
- b. how smart others think I am _____
- c. how well my creations work or how well I do my job _____
- d. how many new ideas I have or how insightful I am _____

In a group, the role I like best is:

- a. handling the social aspects, making sure everyone is involved _____
- b. doing all the research so we have the information we need _____
- c. having my own assigned duties that I can complete on time _____
- d. being the leader and inspiring everyone to pursue a common goal _____

In a drama, I prefer to:

- a. be an actor _____
- b. write the script _____
- c. build the set _____
- d. direct the play _____

When I have spare time, I like to:

- a. have a party or visit _____
- b. learn something new _____
- c. build something _____
- d. travel _____

Three words that best describe me are:

- a. friendly, sharing, hugging _____
- b. rational, analytic, smart _____
- c. active, realistic, practical _____
- d. curious, leader, imaginative _____

In a discussion, I like to:

- a. listen to others' ideas and then share my opinions _____
- b. present the facts and organize the ideas _____
- c. critique the ideas and present the rational solution _____
- d. brainstorm and see if we've explored all the possibilities _____

Add up the amounts by letter for each letter, and enter the totals below.

TOTALS: a_____ b_____ c_____ d_____

We all have some attributes of each learning style. What we want to do is identify our *dominant* style, so we can appreciate how others like to learn. Then we can better enjoy being a student in a mixed class, or being a teacher who meets the needs of more students. Having close scores in each category shows a diverse approach to learning, while a heavily weighted score in a single category indicates a consistent approach to learning. The goal is not to become a different kind of learner, but to consciously identify and accept each style as a valid way to learn. This promotes unity, harmony, and understanding.