

## Learning Styles

It is important to keep in mind that research on teaching styles suggests that we generally tend to teach using our own learning style. However, if your student prefers a different learning style from yours, learning may be slowed down. For example, you may notice that your student has difficulty grasping concepts that are easy for you to understand. It is possible that you are using the teaching method that helps you learn best. However, your student's way of learning might be different from yours, so choosing another method might be more effective.

It is valuable to know something about different ways of learning because it allows you to adapt your tutoring style to better suit your student's preferred way of learning.

The Frontier College SCIL method strongly encourages you to see your student as an individual with very specific needs. This section on learning styles is meant to help you figure out how your student learns best so that you can develop an individualized tutoring approach for your student. Use it as you need it. However, do not try to fit your student into a box. Like all of us, they are a complex individual who wants to learn and you are in the position of determining how best to help your student do that.

## ***Barsch Learning Style Inventory***

The Barsch Inventory does not take long to complete. Try to answer the questions based on your actual learning preference. Complete the inventory on your own; as well, you may find it helpful to go over the inventory with your learner.

This inventory has 24 statements with assigned values that are used in the scoring process. The selections, values, and descriptions are listed below.

Three learning styles are assessed – visual, auditory, and kinesthetic.

Selection	Value	Description
Often True	5 points	This statement is often true of me.
Sometimes True	3 points	This statement is sometimes true of me (about half the time).
Seldom True	1 point	This statement is seldom true of me.

## ***Barsch Learning Style Preference Form***

Read each statement carefully and select the value (5, 3, or 1) that accurately describes your learning style.

### ***Section I – Visual***

Value	Statement
	Follow written instructions better than oral directions.
	Like to write things down or take notes for visual review.
	Am skillful at and enjoy developing and making graphs and charts.
	Can understand and follow directions on maps.
	Can better understand a news article by reading about it than by listening to it on the radio.
	Feel the best way to remember is to picture it in my head.
	Grip objects in my hands during learning periods.
	Obtain information on an interesting subject by reading related materials.

### Section II – Auditory

Value	Statement
	Can remember more about a subject through listening than reading.
	Require explanations of graphs, diagrams, or visual directions.
	Can tell if sounds match when presented with pairs of sounds.
	Do better at academic subjects by listening to tapes and lectures.
	Learn to spell better by repeating the letters out loud than by writing the word on paper.
	Would rather listen to a good lecture or speech rather than read about the same material in a book.
	Prefer listening to the news on the radio than reading about it in the newspaper.
	Follow oral directions better than written ones.

### Section III – Kinesthetic

Value	Statement
	Bear down extremely hard when writing.
	Enjoy working with tools or working on models.
	Remember best by writing things down several times.
	Play with coins or keys in pockets.
	Chew gum, snack, or smoke during studies.
	Do a lot of gesturing, well-coordinated.
	Good at working and solving jigsaw puzzles and mazes.
	Feel very comfortable touching others, hugging, handshaking, etc.

Western Oregon University, 2011

## Scoring

Add up your scores for each section and write them in the boxes below.

Section I – Visual	Section II – Auditory	Section III - Kinesthetic

*Note: Tied scores may indicate an ability to learn comfortably using both those learning styles.*

The following chart details typical characteristics of each learning style and tips on how to meet that style. Refer to this chart when you are planning lessons; specifically, if your student’s learning style is different from yours.

Learning Style	Characteristics	Learning Tips
Visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>needs to see to know it</li> <li>strong sense of colour</li> <li>may have artistic ability</li> <li>difficulty with spoken directions</li> <li>may be easily distracted by sounds</li> <li>trouble following lectures</li> <li>misinterpretation of spoken words</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>use graphics to reinforce</li> <li>colour coding to organize notes and possessions</li> <li>written directions</li> <li>use flow charts and diagrams for note taking</li> <li>visualize spelling of words or facts to be memorized</li> </ul>
Auditory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>prefers to get information by listening—needs to hear or speak it to know it</li> <li>written directions are more difficult to follow than spoken directions</li> <li>prefers listening to reading and writing</li> <li>inability to read body language and facial expressions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>use of tapes for reading and for class lecture notes</li> <li>learning by interviewing or by participating in discussions</li> <li>works well in study groups</li> <li>test questions or directions are read aloud or recorded</li> </ul>
Kinesthetic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>prefers hands-on learning</li> <li>can assemble parts correctly without reading directions</li> <li>difficulty sitting still</li> <li>learns better when physical activity is involved</li> <li>may be very well coordinated and have athletic ability</li> <li>usually likes to move while learning, i.e., tapping pencil, shaking foot and/or holding something</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>experiential learning (making models, doing lab work, and role playing)</li> <li>frequent breaks in study periods</li> <li>tracing letters and words to learn spelling and to remember facts</li> <li>use computer to reinforce learning through sense of touch</li> <li>memorize or drilling while walking or exercising</li> </ul>

## ***Gardner's intelligences***

Howard Gardner (1983), a psychologist from Harvard, is an educator who has examined the ways that people learn. He concluded that all human beings have seven types of “intelligences” related to seven different areas in the brain. We use all of these intelligences, but may have a dominant intelligence through which we learn best.

While Gardner’s research was conducted with young people, his findings can be applied to adults as well. The seven intelligences identified by Gardner are:

### ***Linguistic***

People with linguistic intelligence have a facility with words. They enjoy reading and writing and even storytelling. They may also have a gift for word and trivia games.

### ***Logical-mathematical***

People with logical-mathematical intelligence are good at abstract and logical thinking. They like doing puzzles or playing chess. Many people with this type of dominant intelligence enjoy using computers.

### ***Spatial***

People with spatial intelligence are good at thinking in images or pictures.

They like designing or inventing things and many of them develop an interest in machinery or various systems.

### ***Musical***

People with musical intelligence generally have a strong musical sense. They like to sing or play an instrument. They’ve *got rhythm*. They are the ones who like to lead sing-alongs or the first ones to hear the sounds of bells or birdsong.

### ***Bodily-kinesthetic***

People with bodily-kinesthetic intelligence are athletically inclined. They tend to go with their *gut feelings* much of the time. Many have excellent coordination.

### ***Interpersonal***

People with interpersonal intelligence have excellent *people* skills. They tend to be very sociable and are usually the organizers in their community. Sometimes they can be

manipulative and are good conflict mediators. They enjoy doing things with others.

### *Intrapersonal*

People with intrapersonal intelligence are self-possessed and quite comfortable working on their own. They prefer individual projects to group work.

It has been suggested that school systems are good at dealing with only two of these seven intelligences, namely, linguistic and logical-mathematical. This means that individuals who learn best with the other styles or intelligences may not do well in school and may need to access other types of educational programs, such as adult literacy programs.

### *Determining your student's strengths*

It can be difficult to determine the way your student learns best. As a tutor, you will have to observe and pick up cues as to how your student learns. One question that you may want to ask your student to determine her preferred way of learning is:

How would you go about learning a new dance, such as foxtrot, or hip hop?

A linguistic student may talk with somebody who knows the dance moves to find out how it is done.

A logical-mathematical student may want to know in a diagram how the steps go one after another.

A spatial student may enjoy looking at the basic steps and trying different variations of the steps.

A musical student may want to listen to the music first and then invent the steps before looking at a text.

A bodily-kinesthetic student will find a partner who can show him the steps.

The interpersonal student may want to try a dancing class.

The intrapersonal student may choose to look at the sequence of steps and practice alone in front of the mirror.

## ***Tutoring Strategies adapted to different intelligences***

You might work with your student, who exhibits one of the seven intelligences, in the following ways:

### ***Linguistic***

Since people who have a strong linguistic intelligence are generally aware of how language is used and enjoy telling stories, you may try to help your student create her own book of stories. Autobiographical material is always interesting for a student because it focuses on the personal.

If your student is uncomfortable writing, act as a scribe and write her story as she dictates it. Since the story is the student's, the text will be easy to read.

### ***Logical-mathematical***

Students with dominant logical-mathematical intelligence look for patterns and relationships between words and ideas in a text. You can use crossword puzzles, word games, and even palindromes (words or phrases that read the same forwards and backwards) such as "Lid off a daffodil." After a few examples, the student may want to try to write and read some palindromes of her own.

### ***Spatial***

People who exhibit spatial intelligence need visual cues in order to read. So you might consider creating text using words and pictures. For example, you might get the student to write a letter in the form of a collage. After your student reads the letter in collage form, she could write the letter using words, and then read it. People with spatial intelligence tend to enjoy creative activities, so do not be afraid to do things differently.

### ***Musical***

Students who demonstrate strong musical intelligence will benefit from the use of any text associated with music to help them read. For example, you can try recording a song that the student likes. The song can be played and you can both sing along. Use the recording to transcribe the lyrics. You can also use the lyrics to create a fill in the blanks (cloze) exercise and ask the student to complete the lyrics with the missing words or to substitute new words. For more details on cloze exercises, see section *Tutor strategies and activities* for beginning learners.

Another idea is to have the student listen to the melody and try to write her own lyrics. You can use any type of music, but ask for the student's preference.

### ***Bodily-kinesthetic***

If your student's dominant intelligence is bodily-kinesthetic, she will be inclined to write things down. Kinesthetic students often enjoy learning to read using computers—anything that can increase tactile sensitivity. Another activity that kinesthetic students would probably enjoy is a walking tour. Walk through the neighbourhood and read street signs, billboards, etc. This would be a very effective way of using the student's particular strength. The student can write down key words while on tour and these can be used later to write a story.

### ***Interpersonal***

People with this type of dominant intelligence consider reading to be a social activity. Paired reading, choral reading, and taking turns reading aloud are all activities that will stimulate the interest of this type of reader.

### ***Intrapersonal***

People who demonstrate intrapersonal intelligence require a great deal of meaningful and varied reading materials to choose from. They can usually teach themselves to read. For this type of student you may just need to provide some encouragement. Since many adults with this type of intelligence “follow a different drummer,” you must find out what interests the student most, and then try to find appropriate and interesting material.

Finally, remember the words from ancient China:

*Tell me, I'll forget*

*Show me, I may remember;*

*But involve me and I'll understand.*

The key to success, no matter what learning style a student possesses, is their involvement in all aspects of the learning relationship.