HOW TO LEARN LIKE A PRO!



Nissila

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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By the time students enter higher education, most have a pretty good idea how they learn best, though they may not have thought about it specifically. Perhaps you do, too.

For example, is it easier for you to learn by reading the instructions or by studying charts and graphs (visual learning)? Do you do better by hearing someone explain something or by listening to a video presentation (auditory, also known as aural, learning)? Or, does it help you to actually "get your hands on" whatever the task is, whether writing a paper, fixing the sink, or organizing a softball game (kinesthetic learning)?

These three learning styles, as they are called, are some of the most common ways we comprehend information, whether learning in a classroom, a kitchen, or on the job. We will be covering two additional well-known learning theories, the "Brain Dominance Theory" and "Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences," as well. But for starters, complete the following exercise.

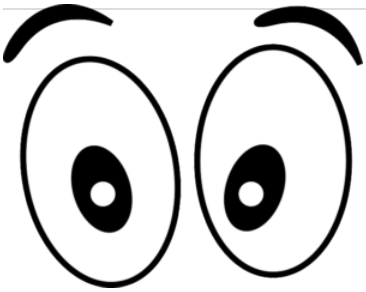
UNIT 1, EXERCISE 1.1

Take the Learning Style Inventory to capture your "best practices" when it comes to the basic three learning styles. This inventory and others you will take throughout the course will become part of your take-home mid-term and take-home final. When you complete the "Learning Styles Inventory":

1. Download the inventory.
2. Download the article What's Your Learning Style.
3. Based on your inventory results, annotate by highlighting, underling, circling, or some other annotation device, ideas about how to maximize your learning style and strengthen others from the lists of multiple styles and preferences. Annotate for at least FIVE helpful perspectives and/or strategies per each of the three learning styles. Save this in your notebook for help with your portfolio's written response for this unit. Your instructor may require you to hand it in for scoring.

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Studies indicate that up to 80% of us use our sense of sight as our primary learning *style*, or modality. Unfortunately, a lot of information in classrooms, workshops, meetings, and so on, is delivered in a lecture format. Nevertheless, there are still visual strategies that can be used to aid the learner.

To see how one teacher expanded her classroom presentations to include more visual strategies (and her success with that), and to offer several more visual strategies that may be helpful for you, too, complete the following exercise.

UNIT 1, EXERCISE 2.1

- Download the article "Getting the Picture" Using Visual Learning Techniques to Foster Higher order Thinking Skills…(read more)" by Katherine Ha.
- Annotate the article: highlight, underline, or circle at least 5 visual learning activities Ha assigned her students.

We will discuss in class what you found, and you will use the information for a writing response assignment at the end of the unit.

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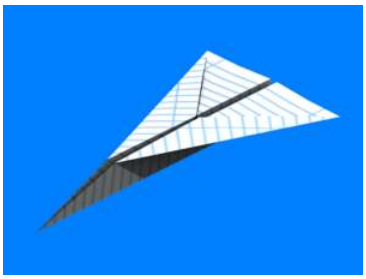
Modality number two is learning by hearing, or auditory/aural learning. Studies show that the percentage of people who learn best by hearing is as low as 10%, so most of us need strategies for how to get the most out of straight lecture classes or workshop and meeting presentations.

For a reminder of how tricky this type of learning can be, complete the following exercise.

UNIT 1, EXERCISE 3.1

1. Write out instructions on how to create **a simple paper airplane***. NO FAIR COPYING ANYBODY ELSE'S INSTRUCTIONS, online or your uncle's. These must be YOUR original instructions that your instructor will be presenting to the class to see how classmates hear your directions and how you have organized the tasks. NO ILLUSTRATIONS, only words.
2. When your instructions are read by the instructor, you may not offer any prompts, explanations, apologies, or comments.

*If you have never have tried this before, here is an example:



"Paper Airplane" by pfunked is licensed under CC BY 3.0

UNIT 1, EXERCISE 3.2

Read the article Auditory Learning and choose six strategies that you think might help you. You can either download the article to annotate, or list the strategies on a separate piece of paper.

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“Helping hands” by AlphaZeta is in the Public Domain, CC0

Kinesthetic or hands-on/tactile learners, surprisingly, comprise only about 25-50% of learners. But maybe I’m surprised because I am definitely a kinesthetic learner! It is my major mode. For kinesthetic learners, adding physical movement as a comprehension strategy is one of the best ways to learn. They do not do as well just listening to lectures or watching videos or sitting through power point presentations.

You have already gleaned much information on how to adapt a learning environment for this kind of learner from the previous readings and exercises in this unit. Now, take a look at one special environment designed primarily for hands-on learning, and complete the exercise below.

UNIT 1, EXERCISE 4.1

For a look at one way kinesthetic learning has been incorporated into an educational facility specifically for learning challenged students, take a look at a website advertising a facility called Academy at SOAR. There is a short video presentation, and several features to read and learn about this facility that serves a population that often struggles in more traditional settings.

As you watch and read, you will learn about several kinesthetically-designed learning activities including hiking, rock climbing, snorkeling, a Spanish-immersion program and more.

For each of FIVE of these activities, write down as many traditional classroom or “regular school” learning tasks as you can think of. This is a good activity for a team or study group, as well as for individual students.

EXAMPLE:

ACTIVITY: rock climbing

CLASSROOM LEARNING TASKS:

survival skills (detail these)

physical fitness (detail these)

safety skills (details)

Math…

communication…

Writing assignment…

Get the idea?

The results of your lists will be discussed in class.

UNIT 1, EXERCISE 4.2

PART A: Team activity.

1. Team up in groups of three at the most.
2. Your instructor will assign each team a “learning style” (visual, auditory, or kinesthetic).
3. Decide how you would teach a group of teens, in a high-risk group for not completing their high school education, the importance of graduating.
4. Use “your learning style” to decide how you would present the information.

5. Oh, and your community LOVES to fund education, so you have an UNLIMITED budget for field trips, production projects, etc. NOTE: you do not have to actually present the lesson, just describe it to share with the class, later on. For online learners, you can perhaps get together with a study group, or do this on your own, choosing any of the learning styles.

PART B: Independent activity–case study. Help Ben!

Ben, a first-time college student who has not attended school since he graduated high school ten years ago, is anxious about succeeding in college. He recently had to quit his very successful, though small, construction business after he hurt himself and could no longer do many of the tasks. Although he was disappointed, he sold his business and decided to invest his money in higher education to fulfill a dream he had as a youngster: becoming a history teacher. He loves to read as much as he loves building custom homes, so he looks at what happened to him as a chance to start a new chapter. That said, he's nervous.

He was never an "A" student in school, although he received several awards for his work in shop and art classes. He also did pretty well in history classes as long as he could use his creativity. He found it hard to sit still and he was easily distracted when the teachers lectured, but he was one of the first to comprehend the information on charts and graphs. His GPA was high enough, however, to get him into college.

He wonders if you would give him some strategies about how to help him get the most out of his classes, given what he has shared, here.

Instructions: write a letter to Ben with TEN advice points to help him in his classes. Include specific strategies related to what you believe are his strongest learning styles. But also keep in mind where he struggles, too, so you can offer him some help there, as well. He has to take the following classes his first term: math, writing, effective learning, physical education, and an elective which, as you might guess, is History of the Americas, 101. A letter of advice of about 250 words will suffice.

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1.5: Lesson 1.5: The Brain Dominance Theory 1.5: Lesson 1.5: The Brain Dominance TheoryEdit Update titlecancel



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The next learning theory reviewed in this series is somewhat controversial. It is called the "Brain Dominance Theory," or, technically, Lateralization of Brain Function. This theory suggests that certain approaches to thinking and learning differ according to the hemispheres, left and right, of the brain. Critics of this theory claim it is the result of pop psychology more than sound science. Indeed, common sense indicates that, of course, we utilize all parts of the brain continually–which is why I like the multi-colored graphic of the brain. It infers a kind of brain symmetry–if not of function, of form.

To utilize your own "both/and" brain power, first read the article linked above, annotating for, or taking notes on, information you want to remember and include, perhaps, in your mid-term portfolio project and for your responses to the exercises below.

UNIT 1, EXERCISE 5.1

1. Review the chart below that gives a brief summary of the so-called right/left brain kinds of activities, thinking, and preferences.

LEFT BRAIN	RIGHT BRAIN
Logical	Uses feeling/intuition
Detail oriented	Perceives the "big picture"
Facts are important	Imagination is important
Math and science interests	Philosophy, religion, art interests
Perceives patterns	Perceives spatial relationships
Reality based	Fantasy is a focus
Keen on analysis/strategies	Considers possibilities
Linear thinking	Thinks holistically

2. Based on the information gleaned in the article and in # 1, design two 8 1/2 by 11 inches posters, one for each side of the brain, illustrating the same information as is on the chart, but according to how you think each kind of thinker/learner might design them. For example, the poster for "right brain" thinking/learning might be much more colorful. The student might also think of some sort of paper structure (origami?) by which to illustrate the differences. Enjoy.

UNIT 1, EXERCISE 5.2

Based on the information in the article and the chart, above, compare how friends, "R.B." (Right Brain) and "L.B." (Left Brain) would respond to planning a weekend getaway to the fictitious "Wilderness Resort" located in the lush, Pacific Northwest of the U.S. Activities could include: planning, packing, traveling to and from, meals, indoor/outdoor activities, and so on. Contrast R.B. and L.B. regarding at least **5** different activities. **EXAMPLE**: regarding **packing** for activities both indoor (heated pool, fully equipped exercise room, a few casino type gaming tables, dancing, etc.) and outdoor (hiking, boating, guided field trips through an

old growth forest, etc.), RB takes a casual approach: whatever is clean and easy to pack. LB first checks weather forecasts and maybe the location of any poison ivy that might be growing in the forest.

An organization chart might help with this exercise:

ACTIVITY R.B. RESPONSE L.B. RESPONSE

UNIT 1, EXERCISE 5.3

1. Answer the following question (no more than about 150 words):

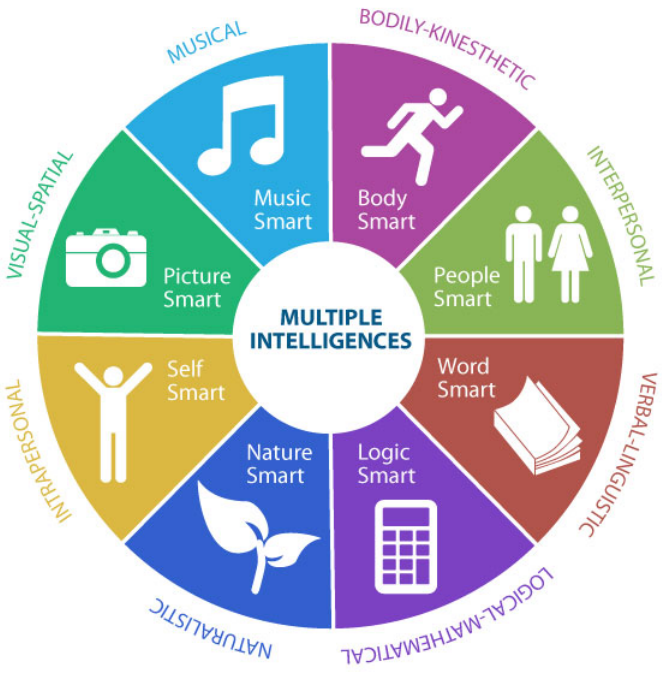
Though it is controversial, how do you think knowing about the Brain Dominance Theory can still help you in the learning process? As you are thinking about this subject, consider how you might enhance your current response to learning and completing assignments or tasks by trying out either new left-brain or right-brain approaches.

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1.6: Lesson 1.6: Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory 1.6: Lesson 1.6: Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences TheoryEdit Update titlecancel

The last learning theory previewed here is called Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory, of which there are currently nine so-called intelligences, listed as follows. (Note: number nine is pretty new on Professor Gardner's evolving list and is yet to be included in most representative graphics, such as the one below.)

1. musical-rhythmic and harmonic
2. visual-spatial
3. verbal-linguistic
4. logical-mathematical
5. bodily-kinesthetic
6. interpersonal
7. intrapersonal
8. naturalist
9. existential.



"Multiple intelligence" by Sajaganesandip is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0

When I began teaching effective learning classes, there were still just the original eight intelligences. According to the article, Gardner may soon add even more, including "teaching-pedagogical intelligence… humor, cooking and sexual intelligence." In Gardner's view, human beings are indeed multi-talented and multi-intelligent.

To help you remember the various learning abilities cited in this theory that are available to us to comprehend and interact with the environments in which we live, study, and work, complete the exercises below.

UNIT 1, EXERCISE 6.1

1. Read the article linked above.
2. Create a list of these intelligences, but define them in your own words.
3. For each intelligence and definition, also create a picture as a mnemonic device. You may wish to create a three-column chart on which to organize the information, for example:

INTELLIGENCE DEFINITION PICTURE/SYMBOL

UNIT 1, EXERCISE 6.2

PART A

Individually, in a team, or in a study group, list as many “intelligences” you can discern that would be used to accomplish the following tasks:

1. Shopping for groceries:
2. Changing the oil in the car:
3. Planning a garden:
4. Acing a math test:
5. Writing a report on the human digestive system:
6. Running a 10k fundraising event:
7. Comforting a friend who just lost a loved one:
8. Organizing a softball game:
9. Collecting samples of music from Latin American countries:
10. Hosting a religious study:
11. Designing a brochure of information for new college students:
12. Performing a scene with your study group from a Shakespearean play:

PART B

Choose 5 of the nine intelligences, and design an activity for each one. Challenge: see if you can design just 1 activity that would incorporate all 5!

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Ice Breaker

Since this is the first week of the course, an “ice breaker” for face-to-face classes helps students get to know each other better while also providing an opportunity to introduce two mnemonic devices: remembering by using association and organizing information by using a graphic (in this case, a three-column chart).

- Direct students to create a chart that has three columns. In the first column, they will write their classmates’ names. Across from each name in the second a third columns, they will write a word then a picture or symbol for each classmate that will help them remember the names (a fishing pole for one who likes to fish, for example, a flower for a gardener, a hat for another who says he always wears hats). Explain that they will be filling it out for as many classmates as they can in whatever time is available for this activity.
- Demonstrate by filling out the first entry for yourself. A “word association” for me might be that I am tall, or that I am the instructor. I ask the students what kind of picture or symbol usually represents a teacher to them. Most often, it will be an apple.
- Give students an amount of time to get as many names down as they can. Afterwards, they can test themselves using this mnemonic creation by studying it however they want to, to help them remember names. Of course, they have also engaged in a good opportunity to find out who they will be learning and working with in a casual and enjoyable way–as has the instructor.

Syllabus Treasure Hunt

Many students will simply tuck a course syllabus away in their notebook. It’s a pretty dull document, after all, with information such as course standards, objectives, classroom rules and regulations, and the like. They might do little more than glance at it and transfer the instructor’s email address and phone number to their cell phone.

However, there is often not only vital but also very useful information in a syllabus: grading information, holidays/school closure lists, where they might access disability accommodations, campus emergency numbers, how to lodge a grievance and many more useful items. One way to not only help them realize that a syllabus contains vital data but also to practice annotation skills is to assign a treasure hunt.

I usually tell the students to annotate (highlight, underline, circle, make marginal notes) for the following three items:

1. Information they especially want to remember (most annotate my contact info)
2. Information they have a question or concern about
3. Any additional information they would appreciate having on this handy resource

Here is a sample EL115 syllabus treasure hunt for a typical EL115 course syllabus at Lane.

Simple Notebook Organization Plan

An additional activity for a face-to-face class is to assign the students a simple notebook organization task (for in-class or for homework). Of course, some students may already have a lovely organizational plan. Here is my suggestion:

From the topmost page when you open the notebook, insert:

- Your assignment/to-do list(s)
- Course syllabus
- Perhaps a list of classmates names/contact information: sample classmate contact form.
- Your text or other official materials (downloaded text, if it is to be downloaded, any additional packets that might be required)
- 12 notebook dividers (one for the handouts, hand backs, scored/graded assignments for each of the 10 weeks of the course; and two for students’ choice. Some of my students prefer to keep all quiz/assessment type tasks in one place, for example. Some of them keep paper in another for note taking or other tasks.

Campus-wide virtual, or Online, website Treasure Hunt

This can be created as an actual physical search around campus for student services, or a website hunt. For our students at Lane, here is a sample online hunt: Lane Community College Students Services, campus treasure hunt.

Optional Extra Credit Opportunities and/or Grading Elements for Unit 1

Grades for this course as taught are determined primarily by the rubrics for the rubric for-take-home mid-term and for the take-home final portfolio projects assigned at the end of Unit 3 and Unit 6, respectively. This instructor teaches this as a face-to-face class presented on a Course Management System (MOODLE, at Lane), and includes points for attendance, as well as some miscellaneous homework assignments, mostly lesson exericises. However, this OER can be used for online or hybrid classes as well.

Here are some suggestions for additional course components and grading elements:

- The Glossary of Terms in the back is good information for weekly quizzes, mid-term tests, and/or final exams.
- For exercise 5.2 (re: the Brain dominance Theory), students could act out their responses.

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