Learning Styles

Do you seem to understand more by reading the instruction manual or by having someone demonstrate how to use something? Do you prefer to touch, feel or experience to learn or have someone tell you information? Each of us has a preferred learning style. Learning styles are those "educational conditions under which a student is most likely to learn," according to Stewart and Felicetti (1992). Learning styles are not really concerned with "what" learners learn, but rather "how" they prefer to learn.

Learners will use multiple ways to give, receive and store information, and most will have a preferred style. It is important not to categorize learners by learning style preference. Learning styles can be a point along a continuum and change with time, subject matter, and other factors. Understanding learning style preferences can help agents and volunteers provide a variety of experiences for youth to allow them the greatest margin of success in learning new skills and concepts.

There are three major learning styles: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic/tactile.

Visual Learners
Visual learners are those who rely most on sight. They tend to prefer seeing things written down and often use pictures, maps, graphs, charts, and other visual learning tools. They remember things best by seeing something written and like handouts and other written mediums. Visual learners often have a good sense of direction and can often be observed doodling or drawing.

Auditory Learners
Auditory learners are those who generally learn best by listening. They prefer demonstrations, videos, lectures, discussions, and reading aloud. Auditory learners remember best through hearing or saying items aloud and can be observed reading out loud to themselves.

Kinesthetic / Tactile Learners
Kinesthetic or tactile learners are those who learn best through touching, feeling, and experiencing that which they are trying to learn. They remember best by writing or physically manipulating the information. Kinesthetic learners prefer role plays, experiments, simulations and other hands-on activities. In many cases, they also like a [Ideas for situations: Building a bird feeder, learning about animal diseases, types of fish, how to judge a model, spinning wool, making a nutritious menu, taking a picture, working with a robot, exhibiting a llama, grooming a dog, writing a skit, leading campers, singing a song, defining electricity terms, planning a club field trip, etc.].

Curriculum Development
In preparing curriculum and planning 4-H activities and events it is important to incorporate all three learning styles. This allows youth to not only maximize the potential for learning using their preferred style, but to experience the other styles as well. This builds their capacity for learning no matter what style is used.

4-H National Headquarters; 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.; MS 2225;
Washington, D.C. 20250
www.national4-hheadquarters.gov

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W , Whitten Building. 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

April 2011

Read through the various situations and determine which learning style is best fitted for the activity.

A. Include outlines, agendas, handouts, etc. for reading and taking notes.
B. Activities that get the learners up and moving.
C. Leave plenty of time to debrief activities. This allows them to make connections of that they learned and how it applies to their situation.
D. Begin new material with a brief explanation of what is coming. Conclude with a summary of what has been covered. This is the old adage of "tell them what they are going to learn, teach them and tell them what they have learned."
E. Use graphs, charts, illustrations or other visual aids
F. Have them transfer information from the text to another medium such as a keyboard or a tablet.

Answers to situations: A. Visual B. Kinesthetic C. Auditory D. Auditory E. Visual F. Kinesthetic

Understanding the differences in learning style preferences of others provides you an additional tool to help plan successful learning experiences. Addressing individual learning style preferences and providing experiences in all styles can help strengthen the potential for each young person to learn.

Prepared by Dr. Pamela Arden (Clemson University) and Mike Kuntz (Oregon State University).

Adapted from The Understanding Learning Styles Lesson from
VRKC: Volunteer Research Knowledge Competency Taxonomy for 4-H Youth Development: http://www.national4-h headquarters.gov/comm/vrkc.pdf
VRKC Research and Design Team:
Ken Culp III, Ph.D., University of Kentucky
Renee K. McKee, Ph.D., Purdue University
Patrick Nestor, Ed.D., West Virginia University
References for the Learning Styles lesson:
Stewart, K. L., & Felicetti, L. A. (1992). Learning styles of marketing majors. *Educational Research Quarterly*, 15(2), 15-23.
Author:
Sue Pleskac, Professor, Volunteer Leadership Specialist, University of Wisconsin-Extension
Editor:
Sue Pleskac, Professor, Volunteer Leadership Specialist, University of Wisconsin-Extension

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W , Whitten Building. 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.