

# LEARNING STYLES

## Learning Styles Questionnaire

Source: Honey, P. & Mumford A. – The Manual of Learning Styles 1986

This questionnaire is designed to find out your preferred learning style(s). Over the years you have probably developed learning “habits” that help you benefit more from some experiences than from others. Since you are probably unaware of this, this questionnaire will help you pinpoint your learning preferences so that you are in a better position to select learning experiences that suit your style.

There is no time limit to this questionnaire. It will probably take you 10-15 minutes. The accuracy of the results depends on how honest you can be. There are no right or wrong answers. If you agree more than you disagree with a statement, put a tick by it (✓). If you disagree more than you agree, put a cross by it (X). Be sure to mark each item with either a tick or a cross.

- 1. I have strong beliefs about what is right and wrong, good and bad.
- 2. I often “throw caution to the winds”.
- 3. I tend to solve problems using a step-by-step approach, avoiding any “flights-of-fancy”.
- 4. I believe that formal procedures and policies cramp people’s style.
- 5. I have a reputation for having a no-nonsense, “call a spade a spade” style.
- 6. I often find that actions based on “gut feel” are as sound as those based on careful thought and analysis.
- 7. I like to do the sort of work where I have time to “leave no stone unturned”.
- 8. I regularly question people about their basic assumptions.
- 9. What matters most is whether something works in practice.
- 10. I actively seek out new experiences.
- 11. When I hear about a new idea or approach I immediately start working out how to apply it in practice.
- 12. I am keen on self discipline such as watching my diet, taking regular exercise, sticking to a fixed routine, etc.
- 13. I take pride in doing a thorough job.
- 14. I get on best with logical, analytical people and less well with spontaneous, “irrational” people.
- 15. I take care over the interpretation of data available to me and avoiding jumping to conclusions.
- 16. I like to reach a decision carefully after weighing up my alternatives.
- 17. I’m attracted more to novel, unusual ideas than to practical ones.
- 18. I don’t like “loose ends” and prefer to fit things into a coherent pattern.
- 19. I accept and stick to laid down procedures and policies so long as I regard them as an efficient way of getting the job done.
- 20. I like to relate my actions to a general principle.
- 21. In discussions I like to get straight to the point.
- 22. I tend to have distant, rather formal relationships with people at work.
- 23. I thrive on the challenge of tackling something new and different.
- 24. I enjoy fun-loving, spontaneous people.
- 25. I pay meticulous attention to detail before coming to a conclusion.

- 26. I find it difficult to come up with wild, off-the-top-of-the-head ideas.
- 27. I don't believe in wasting time by "beating around the bush".
- 28. I am careful not to jump to conclusions too quickly.
- 29. I prefer to have as many sources of information as possible – the more data to mull over the better.
- 30. Flippant people who don't take things seriously enough usually irritate me.
- 31. I listen to other people's point of view before putting my own forward.
- 32. I tend to be open about how I'm feeling.
- 33. In discussions I enjoy watching the manoeuvrings of the other participants.
- 34. I prefer to respond to events of a spontaneous, flexible basis rather than plan things out in advance.
- 35. I tend to be attracted to techniques such as network analysis, flow charts, branching programs, contingency planning, etc.
- 36. It worries me if I have to rush out a piece of work to meet a tight deadline.
- 37. I tend to judge people's ideas on their practical merits.
- 38. Quiet, thoughtful people tend to make me feel uneasy.
- 39. I often get irritated by people who want to rush headlong into things.
- 40. It is more important to enjoy the present moment than to think about the past or future.
- 41. I think that decisions based on a thorough analysis of all the information are sounder than those based on intuition.
- 42. I tend to be a perfectionist.
- 43. In discussions I usually pitch in with lots of off-the-top-of-the-head ideas.
- 44. In meetings I put forward practical realistic ideas.
- 45. More often than not, rules are there to be broken.
- 46. I prefer to stand back from a situation and consider all the perspectives.
- 47. I can often see inconsistencies and weaknesses in other people's arguments.
- 48. On balance I talk more than I listen.
- 49. I can often see better, more practical ways to get things done.
- 50. I think written reports should be short, punchy and to the point.
- 51. I believe that rational, logical thinking should win the day.
- 52. I tend to discuss specific things with people rather than engaging in "small talk".
- 53. I like people who have both feet firmly on the ground.
- 54. In discussions I get impatient with irrelevancies and "red herrings".
- 55. If I have a report to write I tend to produce lots of drafts before settling on the final version.
- 56. I am keen to try things out to see if they work in practice.
- 57. I am keen to reach answers via a logical approach.
- 58. I enjoy being the one that talks a lot.
- 59. In discussions I often find I am the realist, keeping people to the point and avoiding "cloud nine" speculations.
- 60. I like to ponder many alternatives before making up my mind.
- 61. In discussions with people I often find I am the most dispassionate and objective.
- 62. In discussions I'm more likely to adopt a "low profile" than to take the lead and do most of the talking.

- 63. I like to be able to relate current actions to a longer term bigger picture.
- 64. When things go wrong I am happy to shrug it off and “put it down to experience”.
- 65. I tend to reject wild, off-the-top-off-the-head ideas as being impractical.
- 66. It’s best to “look before you leap”.
- 67. On balance I do the listening rather than the talking.
- 68. I tend to be tough on people who find it difficult to adopt a logical approach.
- 69. Most times I believe the end justifies the means.
- 70. I don’t mind hurting people’s feelings so long as the job gets done.
- 71. I find the formality of having specific objectives and plans stifling.
- 72. I’m usually the “life and soul” of the party.
- 73. I do whatever is expedient to get the job done.
- 74. I quickly get bored with methodical, detailed work.
- 75. I am keen on exploring the basic assumptions, principles and theories underpinning things and events.
- 76. I’m always interested to find out what other people think.
- 77. I like meetings to be run on methodical lines, sticking to laid down agenda, etc.
- 78. I steer clear of subjective or ambiguous topics.
- 79. I enjoy the drama and excitement of a crisis situation.
- 80. People often find me insensitive to their feelings.

## Learning Styles Scoring

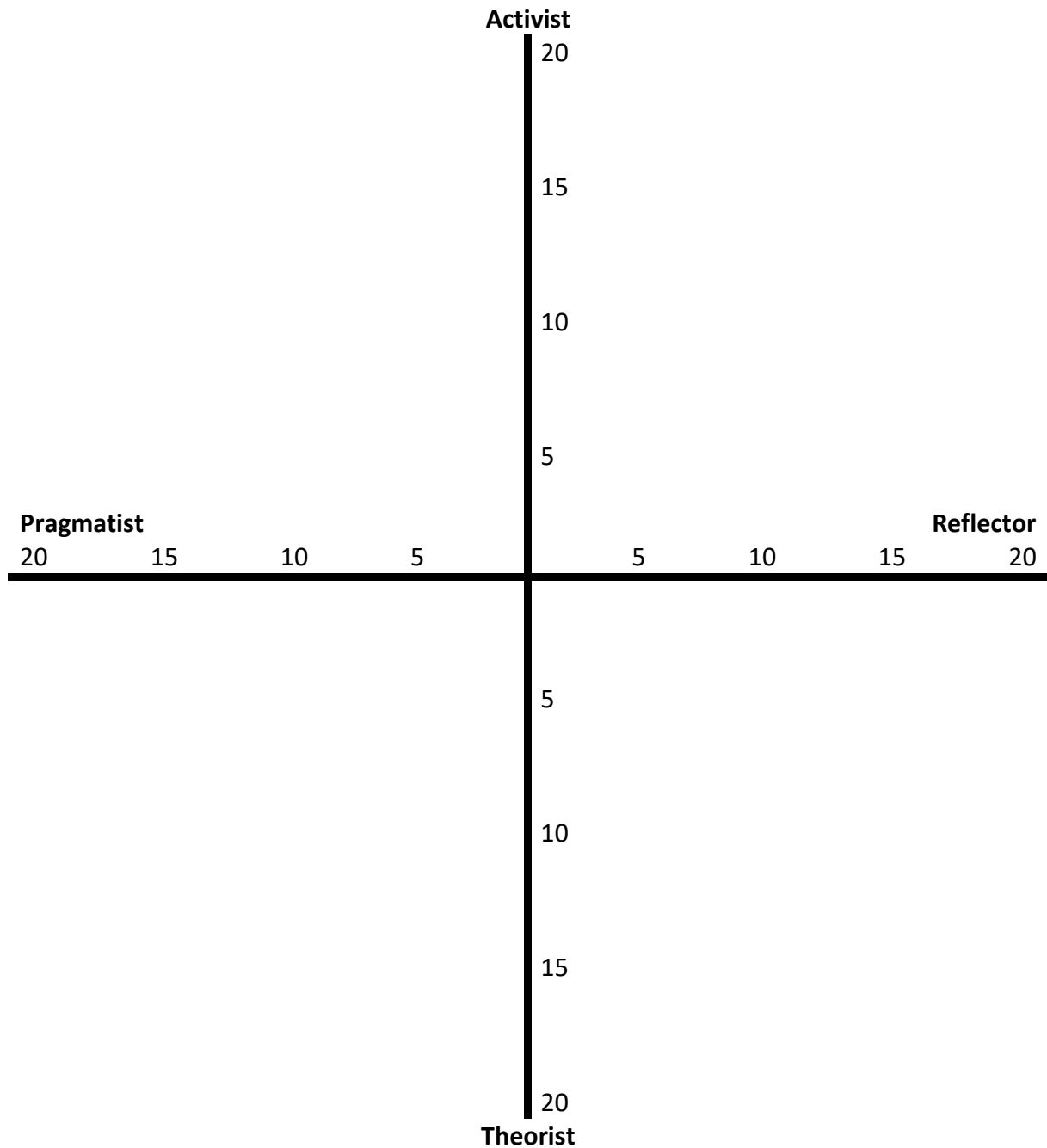
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You score one point for each item you ticked (✓). There are no points for items you crossed (X).

Simply indicate on the lists below which items were ticked.

	2	7	1	5
	4	13	3	9
	6	15	8	11
	10	16	12	19
	17	25	14	21
	23	28	18	27
	24	29	20	35
	32	31	22	37
	34	33	26	44
	38	36	30	49
	40	39	42	50
	43	41	47	53
	45	46	51	54
	48	52	57	56
	58	55	61	59
	64	60	63	65
	71	62	68	69
	72	66	75	70
	74	67	77	73
	79	76	78	80
	_____	_____	_____	_____
Totals	_____	_____	_____	_____
	Activist	Reflector	Theorist	Pragmatist

Plot the scores on the arms of the cross below and apply the appropriate norms (refer to next page).



Once you have plotted the numbers, draw a line connecting the dots. This will show you where your strongest learning style preferences are.

## Learning Styles Norms

Activist	Reflector	Theorist	Pragmatist	
20	20	20	20	<b>Very strong preference</b>
19	19	19	19	
18	18	18	18	
17		17	17	
16		16		
15				
14				
13				
12	17	15	16	<b>Strong preference</b>
11	16	14	15	
	15			
10	14	13	14	<b>Moderate preference</b>
9	13	12	13	
8	12	11	12	
7				
6	11	10	11	<b>Low preference</b>
5	10	9	10	
4	9	8	9	
3	8	7	8	<b>Very low preference</b>
2	7	6	7	
1	6	5	6	
0	5	4	5	
	4	3	4	
	3	2	3	
	2	1	2	
	1	0	1	
	0		0	

## Learning Styles Descriptions

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The Learning Styles Questionnaire is designed to prove the relative strengths of four different learning styles. This section gives a paragraph summarising each of the styles. The Scoring Sheet 'unscrambles' the questionnaire by revealing which items go with which style (there are 20 questionnaire items for each style).

The names given to the four styles are, in no order of importance, **Activist**, **Reflector**, **Theorist** and **Pragmatist**. Here is a description of each:

### **ACTIVISTS**

Activists involve themselves fully and without bias in new experiences. They enjoy the here and now and are happy to be dominated by immediate experiences. They are open-minded, not sceptical, and this tends to make them enthusiastic about anything new. Their philosophy is: "I'll try anything once". They tend to act first and consider the consequences afterwards. Their days are filled with activity. They tackle problems by brainstorming. As soon as the excitement from one activity has died down they are busy looking for the next. They tend to thrive on the challenge of new experiences but are bored with implementation and longer term consolidation. They are gregarious people constantly involving themselves with others but, in doing so; they seek to centre all activities around themselves.

#### **Activists learn best from activities where:**

- There are new experiences / problems / opportunities from which to learn.
- They can engross themselves in short 'here and now' activities such as business games, competitive teamwork tasks, role-playing exercises.
- There is excitement / drama/ crisis and things chop and change with a range of diverse activities to tackle.
- They have a lot of the limelight / high visibility, i.e. they can 'chair' meetings, lead discussions, and give presentations.
- They are allowed to generate ideas without constraints of policy or structure or feasibility.
- They are thrown in at the deep end with a task they think is difficult, i.e. when set a challenge with inadequate resources and adverse conditions.
- They are involved with other people, i.e. bouncing ideas off them, solving problems as part of a team.
- It is appropriate to have a go.

#### **Activists learn least from and may react against activities where:**

- Learning involves a passive role, i.e. listening to lectures, monologues, explanations, statements of how things should be done, reading and watching.
- They are asked to stand back and not be involved.
- They are required to assimilate, analyse and interpret lots of 'messy' data.
- They are required to engage in solitary work, i.e. reading, writing, thinking on their own.
- They are asked to assess beforehand what they will learn, and to appraise afterwards what they have learned.
- They are offered statements they see as 'theoretical', i.e. explanation of a cause or background.
- They are asked to repeat essentially the same activity over and over again, i.e. when practising.
- They have precise instructions to follow with little room for manoeuvre.
- They are asked to do a thorough job, i.e. attend to details, tie up loose ends, dot the i's and cross the t's.

## **REFLECTORS**

Reflectors like to stand back to ponder experiences and observe them from many different perspectives. They collect data, both first hand and from others, and prefer to chew it over thoroughly before coming to any conclusion. The thorough collection and analysis of data about experiences and events is what counts so they tend to postpone reaching definitive conclusions for as long as possible. Their philosophy is to be cautious. They are thoughtful people who like to consider all possible angles and implications before making a move. They prefer to take a back seat in meetings and discussions. They enjoy observing other people in action. They listen to others and get the drift of the discussion before making their own points. They tend to adopt a low profile and have a slightly distant, tolerant manner.

### **Reflectors learn best from activities where:**

- They are allowed or encouraged to watch / think / chew over activities.
- They are able to stand back from the events, listen and observe, i.e. observing a group at work, taking a back seat at a meeting, watching a film or video.
- They are allowed to think before acting, to assimilate before commenting, i.e. time to prepare, a chance to read in advance a brief giving background data.
- They can carry out some painstaking researching, i.e. investigate, assemble information, and probe to get to the bottom of things.
- They have the opportunity to review what has happened, what they have learned.
- They are asked to produce carefully considered analyses and reports.
- They are helped to exchange views with other people without danger, i.e. by prior agreement, within a structured learning experience.
- They can reach a decision in their own time without pressure and tight deadlines.

### **Reflectors learn least from and may react against activities where:**

- They are forced into the limelight, i.e. to act as leader / chairman, to role-play in front of onlookers.
- They are involved in situations that require action without planning.
- They are pitched into doing something without warning, i.e. to produce an instant reaction, to produce an off-the-top-of-the-head idea.
- They are given insufficient data on which to base a conclusion.
- They are given cut and dried instructions on how things should be done.
- They are worried by time pressures or rushed from one activity to another.
- In the interests of expediency they have to make short cuts or do a superficial job.

## **THEORISTS**

Theorists adapt and integrate observations into complex but logically sound theories. They think problems through in a vertical, step by step logical way. They assimilate disparate facts into coherent theories. They tend to be perfectionists who won't rest easy until things are tidy and fit into their rational scheme. They like to analyse and synthesise. They are keen on basic assumptions, principles, theories models and systems thinking. Their philosophy prizes rationality and logic. "If it's logical it's good". Questions they frequently ask are: "Does it make sense?" "How does this fit with that?" "What are the basic assumptions?" They tend to be detached, analytical and dedicated to rational objectivity rather than anything subjective or ambiguous. Their approach to problems is consistently logical. This is their "mental set" and they rigidly reject anything that doesn't fit with it. They prefer to maximise certainty and feel uncomfortable with subjective judgements, lateral thinking and anything flippant.



### **Theorists learn best from activities where:**

- What is being offered is part of a system, model, concept and theory.
- They have time to explore methodically the associations and inter relationships between ideas, events and situations.
- They have the chance to question and probe the basic methodology, assumptions or logic behind something, i.e. by taking part in a question and answer session, by checking a paper for inconsistencies.
- They are intellectually stretched, i.e. by analysing a complex situation, being tested in a tutorial session, by teaching high calibre people who are searching questions.
- They are in structured situations with a clear purpose.
- They can listen to or read about ideas and concepts that emphasise rationality or logic and are well argued, elegant and watertight.
- They can analyse and then generalise the reasons for success or failure.
- They are offered interesting ideas and concepts even though they are not immediately relevant.
- They are required to understand and participate in complex situations.

### **Theorists learn least from and may react against activities where:**

- They are pitchforked into doing something without a context or apparent purpose.
- They have to participate in situations emphasising emotions and feelings.
- They are involved in unstructured activities where ambiguity and uncertainty are high, i.e. with open-ended problems, or sensitivity training.
- They are asked to act or decide without a basis in policy, principle or concept.
- They are faced with a hotchpotch of alternative or contradictory techniques / models without exploring in any depth, i.e. as on a 'once over lightly' course.
- They doubt that the subject matter is methodologically sound, i.e. where questionnaires have not been validated, where there are no statistics to support an argument.
- They find the subject matter platitudinous, shallow or gimmicky.

## **PRAGMATISTS**

Pragmatists are keen on trying out ideas, theories and techniques to see if they work in practice. They positively search out new ideas and take the first opportunity to experiment with applications. They are the sort of people who return from management courses brimming with new ideas that they want to try out in practice. They like to get on with things and act quickly and confidently on ideas that attract them. They tend to be impatient with ruminating and open-ended discussions. They are essentially practical, down to earth people who like making practical decisions and solving problems. They respond to problems and opportunities "as a challenge". Their philosophy is: "There is always a better way" and "If it *works* it's good".

### **Pragmatists learn best from activities where:**

- There is an obvious link between the subject matter and a problem or opportunity on the job.
- They are shown techniques for doing things with obvious practical advantages, i.e. how to save time, how to make a good first impression, how to deal with awkward people.
- They have the chance to try out and practice techniques with coaching feedback from a credible expert, i.e. someone who is successful and can do the techniques themselves.
- They are exposed to a model they can emulate, i.e. a respected manager, a demonstration from someone with a proven track record, lots of examples, anecdotes, a film showing how it is done.
- They are given techniques currently applicable to their own job.
- They are given immediate opportunities to implement what they have learned.
- There is a high face validity in the learning activity, i.e. a good simulation, 'real' problems.
- They can concentrate on the practical issues, i.e. drawing up action plans with an obvious end product, suggesting short cuts, giving tips.

### **Pragmatists learn least from and may react against activities where:**

- The learning is not related to an immediate need they recognise; they cannot see an immediate relevance or practical benefit.
- Organisers of the learning or the event itself seem distant from reality, i.e. ivory towered, all theory and general principles, pure 'chalk and talk'.
- There is not practice or clear guidelines on how to do it.
- They feel that people are going round in circles and not getting anywhere fast enough.
- There are political, managerial or personal obstacles to implementation.
- There are no apparent rewards from the learning activity, i.e. more sales, shorter meetings, higher bonuses, promotions.

## **LEARNING STYLES – GENERAL DESCRIPTIONS**

### **ACTIVISTS**

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## **KEY QUESTIONS**

### **KEY QUESTIONS FOR ACTIVISTS**

- Shall I learn something new, i.e. that I didn’t know/couldn’t do before?
- Will there be a wide variety of different activities? (I don’t want to sit and listen for more than an hour at a stretch!)
- Will it be OK to have a go/let my hair down/make mistakes/have fun?
- Shall I encounter some tough problems and challenges?
- Will there be other like-minded people to mix with?

### **KEY QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTORS**

- Shall I be given inadequate time to consider, assimilate and prepare?
- Will there be opportunities/facilities to assemble relevant information?
- Will there be opportunities to listen to other people’s points of view – preferably a wide cross-section of people with a variety of views?
- Will I be under pressure to be slap-dash or to extemporise?

### **KEY QUESTIONS FOR THEORISTS**

- Will there be lots of opportunities to question?
- Do the objectives and program of events indicate a clear structure and purpose?
- Shall I encounter complex ideas and concepts that are likely to stretch me?
- Are the approaches to be used and concepts to be explored “respectable”, i.e. sound and valid?
- Shall I be with people of similar calibre to myself?

### **KEY QUESTIONS FOR PRAGMATISTS**

- Will there be ample opportunities to practise and experiment?
- Will there be lots of practical tips and techniques?
- Shall we be addressing real problems and will it result in action plans to tackle some of my current problems?
- Shall we be exposed to experts who know how to/can do it themselves?

These questions, just four or five for each style, are worth asking whenever you get the chance to put them to organisers of a learning activity. If you are unhappy with the answers and if the proposed course does not seem likely to suit your style, we suggest you search out something that will. After all, there are plenty to choose from. It’s a learner’s market; if you choose to make it so.