

The Four Learning Styles

For more information please refer to Honey P and Mumford A; *Learning Styles Questionnaire, 80-item, July 2006 edition*; Maidenhead, UK; ISBN-10: 1-902899-29-6; ISBN-13: 978-1902899-29-9. For more information please visit www.peterhoney.com.

Activists

Activists like to take direct action. They are enthusiastic and welcome new challenges and experiences. They are less interested in what has happened in the past or in putting things into a broader context. They are primarily interested in the here and now. They like to have a go, try things out and participate. They like to be the centre of attention.

Activists will learn **most easily** from activities where

- there are new experiences/problems/opportunities from which to learn
- they can engross yourself in short 'here and now' activities
- 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
- they are allowed to generate lots of ideas
- they are thrown in at the deep end with a task you think is difficult/challenging
- they are involved with other people, e.g. bouncing ideas off them, solving problems as part of a team
- it is appropriate to 'have a go'.

Activists will find it **more difficult** to learn from activities where

- learning involves a passive role, e.g. listening to lectures, monologues, explanations, statements of how things should be done, reading, watching
- they are asked to stand back and not be involved
- they are required to engage in solitary work, e.g. reading, writing, thinking on your own
- they are asked to repeat essentially the same activity over and over again, e.g. when practising
- they have precise instructions to follow with little room for manoeuvre
- they are asked to do a thorough job, e.g. attend to detail, tie up loose ends, dot i's and cross t's.

So, in summary, Activists like:

- to think on their feet
- to have short sessions
- plenty of variety
- the opportunity to initiate
- to participate and have fun.

Reflectors

Reflectors like to think about things in detail before taking action. They take a thoughtful approach. They are good listeners and prefer to adopt a low profile. They are prepared to read and re-read and will welcome the opportunity to repeat a piece of learning.

Reflectors will learn **most easily** from activities where

- they are able to stand back from events and listen/observe, e.g. take a back seat in a group activity, watch a film or video
- they are allowed to think before acting, e.g. time to prepare, a chance to read background information in advance
- they can carry out some painstaking research, e.g. investigate, gather information, probe to get to the bottom of things
- they have the opportunity to think about what has happened, what you have learned
- they are asked to produce carefully considered analyses and reports
- they can reach a decision in your own time without pressure and tight deadlines.

Reflectors will find it **more difficult** to learn from activities where

- they are 'forced' into the limelight, e.g. to act as leader, 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, e.g. to produce an instant reaction, to produce an off-the-top-of-the-head idea
- they are given insufficient information on which to base a conclusion
- they are given cut and dried instructions of how things should be done
- they are worried by time pressures or rushed from one activity to another
- they are not given time to do a thorough job.

So, in summary, Reflectors like:

- to think before acting
- thorough preparation
- to research and evaluate
- to make decisions in their own time
- to listen and observe.

Theorists

Theorists like to see how things fit into an overall pattern. They are logical and objective systems people who prefer a sequential approach to problems. They are analytical, pay great attention to detail and tend to be perfectionists.

Theorists will learn **most easily** from activities where

- they have time to be methodical and to explore the associations and interrelationships 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 working with people who ask searching questions
- they are in structured situations with a clear purpose
- they can listen to, or read about, ideas and concepts that emphasize rationality or logic and are well argued/watertight
- they are offered interesting ideas and concepts even though they may not be immediately relevant
- they are required to understand and participate in complex situations.

Theorists will find it **more difficult** to learn from activities where

- they are pitchforked into doing something without enough background information or an apparent purpose
- they have to participate in situations emphasising emotions and feelings
- they are involved in unstructured activities where uncertainty is high
- they are asked to act, or decide, without proper guidelines
- they are faced with a hotchpotch of alternative/contradictory techniques/methods
- they doubt that the subject matter is methodologically sound, eg where questionnaires haven't been validated, where there aren't any statistics to support the argument
- they find the subject matter banal, shallow or gimmicky
- they feel out of tune with other participants, eg when with lots of Activists or people of lower intellectual calibre.

So, in summary, Theorists like:

- concepts and models
- to see the overall picture
- to feel intellectually stretched
- structure and clear objectives
- logical presentation of ideas.

Pragmatists

Pragmatists like to see how things work in practice. They enjoy experimenting with new ideas. They are practical, down to earth and like to solve problems. They appreciate the opportunity to try out what they have learned/are learning.

Pragmatists will learn **most easily** from activities where

- there is an obvious link between the subject matter and a current problem or opportunity at work
- they are shown techniques for doing things with obvious practical advantages, eg 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 practise techniques with coaching from someone you trust, who is successful and can do the techniques themselves
- they have the opportunity to learn from a demonstration by someone with a proven track record or a film showing how it is done
- they are shown techniques that apply to what you are trying to achieve
- they are given immediate opportunities to implement what you have learned
- they can concentrate on practical issues, eg by drawing up action plans with an obvious end product, suggesting short cuts, giving tips.

Pragmatists will find it **more difficult** to learn from activities where

- the learning is not related to an immediate need they recognise/see or an immediate relevance/practical benefit
- organisers of the learning or the event itself seem distanced from reality, ie 'ivory towered', all theory and general principles, pure 'chalk and talk'
- there is no 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
- they can't see sufficient reward from the learning activity.

So, in summary, Pragmatists like:

- to see the relevance of their work
- to gain practical advantage from learning
- credible role models
- proven techniques
- activities to be real.