

### Learning Styles (VAK<sup>1</sup>)

Understanding your preferred learning style will help you in planning for your leadership and management development. Learning styles research has suggested various ways in which to define and test how different people learn. There is no one way to define a learner and no one 'right' test to take to find out how you learn.

The Visual-Auditory-Kinaesthetic learning styles model or 'inventory', usually abbreviated to VAK, provides a simple way to explain and understand your own learning style (and learning styles of others).

'Learning style' should be interpreted to mean an individual mixture of styles. Everyone has a mixture of strengths and preferences. No one has exclusively one single style or preference. Please bear this in mind when using these ideas.

The VAK learning styles model provides a very easy and quick reference inventory by which to assess people's preferred learning styles, and then most importantly, to **design learning methods and experiences that match people's preferences:**

**Visual** learning style involves the use of seen or observed things, including pictures, diagrams, demonstrations, displays, handouts, films, flip-chart, etc.

**Auditory** learning style involves the transfer of information through listening: to the spoken word, of self or others, of sounds and noises.

**Kinaesthetic** learning involves physical experience - touching, feeling, holding, doing, practical hands-on experiences.

VAK theory is now a favourite of the accelerated learning community because its principles and benefits extend to all types of learning and development, including executive/workplace learning, stretching beyond its origins in the education sector.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this guidance note is to provide you with some information about learning characteristics as well as examples of strategies for different kinds of learners. The hope is that you will take some time to read the information, think about what applies to you and consider how it might influence your own plan for accelerated learning.

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<sup>1</sup> Visual, Audio, and Kinaesthetic.

<sup>2</sup> Learning in a way that helps you to learn faster and remember more.

## Visual, Audio, and Kinaesthetic Styles

'Visual', 'audio', and 'kinaesthetic' are titles that describe certain types of learners. Although we can all potentially use a combination of these styles, many of us will have personal preferences for the learning style that best suits us.

Based upon whether you are a visual, audio, or kinaesthetic learner (or some combination of these), you will learn differently and will have different ideal learning conditions. The three main VAK styles are described as follows:-

Learning Style	Description
Visual	<i>seeing and reading</i>
Auditory	<i>listening and speaking</i>
Kinaesthetic <sup>3</sup>	<i>touching and doing</i>

The table (overleaf) describes some characteristics and strategies that might help accelerate learning for both learners and facilitators.

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<sup>3</sup> Kinaesthetic style is also referred to as 'Physical', or 'Tactile', or 'Touchy-Feely'. The word 'kinaesthetic' describes the sense of using muscular movement - physical sense in other words. Kinaesthesia and kinesthesia are root words, derived from the Greek kineo, meaning move, and aisthesis, meaning sensation. Kinaesthetic therefore describes a learning style which involves the stimulation of nerves in the body's muscles, joints and tendons. This relates to the colloquial expression 'touchy-feely' ('kineo-aisthesis' = 'move-sensation').

# VAK Characteristics and Strategies for Learners and Facilitators

Learning Style	Visual	Audio	Kinaesthetic
<b>Characteristics of Learners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Remember written directions well.</li> <li>-Need to see material to learn it.</li> <li>-May be artistic.</li> <li>-May have difficulties focusing on workshop speakers if there are few visuals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Very good at remembering what they hear.</li> <li>-May have difficulties remembering things that they have read. Also may have difficulties reading and/or writing.</li> <li>-Can find it hard to read facial and body language.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Need hands-on/active learning (touch and movement).</li> <li>-Don't require instructions to assemble something.</li> <li>-Can have difficulties if have to remain seated for a long period of time.</li> <li>-May be very active or athletic.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategies for Learners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Use visual aids when taking notes/studying (e.g. diagrams).</li> <li>-Look at a person to help you focus on what they are saying.</li> <li>-Work in a relatively quiet location.</li> <li>-Use colour coding.</li> <li>-Visualise facts/word spellings when trying to memorise.</li> <li>-Take clear and detailed notes during workshops.</li> <li>-Review and write out key points from workshops and readings.</li> <li>-Skim a reading prior to starting so that you have a general understanding before you begin.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Record workshops or yourself reading your notes (even just the most important points). Listen to podcasts as one method of studying.</li> <li>- Learn with a partner so you can talk about main ideas of workshops, key points from readings, etc.</li> <li>-Recite aloud what you are trying to learn so that you hear yourself.</li> <li>-Create flashcards for studying and read them aloud.</li> <li>-Before reading, skim the information and tell yourself what you think the reading will be about.</li> <li>-Read aloud.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Take notes relating to workshops using diagrams when possible.</li> <li>-Try moving while you read.</li> <li>-Take advantage of assignments that allow you to do hands-on work.</li> <li>-Use flashcards that you can move on a table or other surface.</li> <li>-Read aloud.</li> <li>-Write information out (on paper, board, etc.) when studying.</li> <li>-Use colour coding.</li> <li>-Listen to course information on podcasts while you move (or recite to yourself).</li> <li>-Take frequent breaks when working and move/stretch.</li> <li>-Try studying in a position other than a chair in front of a desk.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategies for Facilitators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Provide clear outlines with headings (for workshops and possibly readings).</li> <li>-Present information in a visual format (as one option), when possible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Provide clear audio information when possible and make the audio part of workshops as captivating as possible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Use demonstrations in workshops.</li> <li>-Provide opportunities for hands-on/active learning.</li> </ul>