“Make it work!” Flexing Your Learning Style!

Learning Effectively – self-knowledge about how you best remember coupled with psychological research on how memory and learning functions will provide you with the tools to excel!

Today we are going to focus on the results from the LASSI you took on Saturday and discuss some of the current research on learning styles and memory to give you an idea about how to get the most out of your study and class preparation.

On Wednesday, we are going to look at some of the web resources, peer tutoring, and other ways to supplement and support your classroom learning, textbook readings, projects, and papers.

Why should you care:

• **Time:** In addition to the 12-18 hrs you’ll spend in class, you should be spending about 2-3hrs outside of class studying for each hour you’re in that class (i.e., 24 to 36 hrs studying / prepping). That’s a lot of time, particularly if you are involved in sports, have a part-time job, or are involved in campus organizations!!!
  
  o National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) finds that the average student only studies about 13 hrs /wk instead of the 24 hrs/wk they recommend to excel.
  
  o We will be helping develop an effective plan on Thursday, when Lindsey works with you on Goal Setting and Time Management ....

• **Cost:** Money you spend on textbooks, tuition, repeating a course could be saved or redirected if you are both efficient and effective.

• **Grades, scholarships, honors, job / graduate school** – better grades, less stress, more time to do or learn or participate in other things if you learn effectively and efficiently.

Learning preferences mean a variety of things:

• Quiet v. high energy classes
• Morning v. afternoon / evening
• Large v. small class size
• Lecture v. discussion v. hands-on  
• Visual v. auditory presentation of information

**How will understanding how you learn help? If you don’t understand how to learn effectively then you may:**

• Feel bored in class  
• Confused  
• Frustrated that your effort is not paying off  
• Mistakenly believe you aren’t good at some skill  
• Drop out or transfer to another school  
• Think you are too stupid to be in college

**Kuh (2007)** using NSSE data and other reports from students found that: “most 1st year students are spectacularly unprepared for the realities they will face in their academic workloads.”

This class and the other academic support resources that Student Success, Math Center, Writing Center, Career Center, Residence Life, Health & Wellness Center provides are your keys to being *spectacularly prepared* to handle the demands and challenges of college!

**Let’s begin with some basics:**

1. **Where** – you need a dedicated space that “screams” study.... Have you ever tried to change a habit (dieting – and everything reminds you of food because you eat everywhere). You need to find “*your space*” that when you’re there is distraction free, and puts you in the mind to be focused to study.

2. **When** – depending on your schedule, work commitments, and personal preferences (morning lark v. night owl), when to study. Use free time wisely and work on your hardest subjects when you are most alert / aware, when assistance is available (tutors, Math center). Don’t lose your free time like sand running through your fingers.

3. **How to learn - Learning Styles or Preferences** – preferences about how to receive, experience, learn information. **IQ is your capability to learn v. Learning Style is your preferred way or how to learn.**
a. Most of us have topics / subjects that are high interested and a snap, others that are so-so and require a bit of effort, and still others that are dreaded and feel impossible to master.... we have a mix of strengths and weaknesses.

b. Gardner (1993, 2006, 2009) IQ (multiple intelligences) researcher & theorist having studied thousands of extraordinarily intelligent and creative people, have consistently found that even the most brilliant of individuals in their specialty are absolutely clueless when it comes to learning in some other areas.” (p. 108) 9 types of IQ which exist along a continuum: (all have some degree of each / amount differs)

- **Verbal / linguistic** – use language
- **Logical / mathematical** – use logic for problem solving
- **Visual – spatial** – spatial relationships
- **Bodily kinesthetic** – use body to perform tasks
- **Musical** – comprehend & form music
- **Intrapersonal** – engage in self-reflection
- **Interpersonal** – engage in social behavior
- **Naturalistic** – identify patterns in nature
- **Existential** – think about issues of life and death

c. **Sternberg’s Triarchic theory of IQ** – multiple intelligences but here just 3 types:

- **Analytical** – school smarts, academic problem solving
- **Practical** – common sense or street smarts, ability to solve everyday life problems
- **Creative** - develop functional, novel ideas, ways to solve problems, react well to new situations / problems

**Understanding your learning style can help you develop new strategies**
for learning:
• reflecting on your strengths and weaknesses, where to focus
• time management
• selecting, scheduling, and blocking courses,
• active listening
• study groups

Kolb’s Learning Styles theory stipulates that we learn because 2 things happen:

1. We perceive by being observant and alert. How:
   a. Concrete experience – hands on, direct experience, use intuition (hunches) as much as intelligence – work well in unstructured classes
   b. Abstract conceptualization – analysis, hypothesize, test, scientific method type of approach – work well in structured, traditional classes

2. We process: appraise or evaluate our experiences to extract meaning
   a. Reflective processing – stand back and observe, think about what is happening, consider multiple points of view, generate many possible ways to do something or how something can happen
   b. Active experimentation: jump in and do, fully interact, risk takers, results oriented, look for practical ways to apply what they have learned

YOUR Learning Style
Your unique way of perceiving and processing (i.e., learning) - 4 modes (simplified) –

1. Mode 1 Learners - concrete and reflective
   a. want a personal connection to the material
   b. seek a purpose/ reason for new information
   c. what matters in the course
   d. how does is fit or challenge what you already know
   e. readily embrace new ideas that directly relate to their interests and career plans
   f. Why learn this?
2. Mode 2 learners - abstract and reflective
   a. crave information
   b. want to know the main facts, ideas, procedures
   c. seek explanation (theory)
   d. interested in what “experts” have to say
   e. like information presented in a logical organized way
   f. hierarchically organize their information
   g. systematic mastery (steps)
   h. What is the content?

3. Mode 3 learners - abstract and active
   a. want to try out what they are learning
   b. want to test theories and put them into practice
   c. prefer well defined tasks, guided practice, and frequent feedback
   d. How does this work?

4. Mode 4 learners - concrete and active
   a. excited about out of class assignments / learning options
   b. like to apply what they are learning to various situations
   c. use theory to solve real world problems
   d. What if I tried this in a different setting?

**Simpler Version: 3 main styles – Auditory, Visual, Kinesthetic**

1. **Auditory** - learn through listening.
   a. Hear a lecture
   b. Book on tape
   c. Read aloud
   d. Listen to others in study group
   e. Record the lecture

2. **Visual** – learn through seeing.
   a. Focus on images – charts, graphs, photos, drawings
   b. Concept maps
   c. Note taking / outlines
   d. Watch video / online animation

3. **Kinesthetic** – learn by doing.
   a. Hands on - modeling
   b. Practice tests
c. Interactive learning
d. Lab work or field work

General Conclusions:
• Most learn best when using multiple senses (seeing, hearing, doing – multiple memory codes or paths to the information)
• Preference – to the extent you have a strong preference, use it when possible, but work on other ways of learning to enhance your acquisition skills
• Teachers have learning styles too – NO WORRIES.... Research shows that even though classroom filled with people with different learning styles, students with different learning styles tend to do equally well regardless of they are taught – good teachers present information in multiple modalities / senses. “It seems to be more important for the instructor to use teaching styles that match the content, rather than the learning styles of their students.” (Pashler, McDaniel, Rohrer, & Bjork, 2008)
• Positive outlook - positive self talk
• Reward yourself - primary and secondary Rs.