

Learning Styles and your (now) Home-Schooled Child

By Amie Lorence Grubidge, 3/25/20

There are many different kinds of learners. You may already know what learning style best fits your child, or perhaps you are just discovering that now, as we are moving into distance learning for the foreseeable future. By understanding what type of learner your child is, it may help ease tension and minimize conflict at home surrounding school. Understanding your child's learning style will also help maximize your efficiency with instruction. While there are many different theorists who have studied learning styles, I have condensed the research and compiled my experiences through teaching children.

Visual Learner

If your child is a visual learner, they desire to see pictures, charts, maps, graphs, colors, and graphic organizers to gather, organize, and communicate information. These learners need access to paper and colored writing utensils (pens, markers, colored pencils, crayons) to fully process the topic.

Strategies:

- Color Coding: Pick a color for each subject and make sure the notebooks/folders for the subject also correlate. This helps with organization.
- Visual Schedule: Using pictures paired with words will help a visual learner understand what will happen next and will reduce resistance and minimize fatigue because they can understand what is left, therefore pace themselves appropriately. Include breaks in this schedule!
- Use "First, Then..." Language: Tell the student what they need to do first, pair it with a picture/visual, and then explain what they get to do next. It works best to alternate preferred tasks with non-preferred tasks. This helps increase motivation and decrease feelings of overwhelm. Refer to the visual schedule.
- Visual Timer: A visual depiction of the time will be a good source of motivation. There are so many good options out there, but a kitchen timer can work great.
- Illustrate the Process: Show the student your thought process by drawing about it. Stick figures are fine!
- Provide Alternative Response: Incorporate creative response options to check for mastery. The student could create a boardgame, illustrate a picture and provide labels/definitions, etc.

Auditory Learner

If your child is an auditory learner, they require information to be presented aloud. They often require reciprocal communication to process the information. Information may need to be presented multiple times or repeated in other ways. These learners need to ask and answer questions about the topic to fully process the topic.

Strategies:

- Repeat, repeat, repeat: Plan to repeat yourself and provide multiple explanations for the same question as the student is contemplating what you've said.
- Utilize Audiobooks: These can be paused and repeated as many times as necessary. This is helpful when retaining new information.
- Provide time for questions: Students often need to process the information verbally to be able to hear the responses to their questions. Plan to give students time during and after the lesson to ask their questions. This is a critical part of their learning.
- Find videos to support learning: There are so many great virtual resources that you can pair with the student's learning. If they are studying King Tut, find a video for them to watch after the lesson. Not only is it engaging, but it reinforces the information they've learned and presents it in new ways.

Kinesthetic Learner

If your child is a kinesthetic learner, they need to be able to manipulate materials and experiment with ideas using their bodies. These learners are typically called, "hands-on learners." However, kinesthetic is better terminology because these learners do best using their whole body to learn. They often need movement and think best when in motion.

Strategies:

- Go outside: Hear, see, smell, and touch the world around you. These are incredible learning opportunities for these learners.
- Minimize "Talk-Time": Provide information in small, manageable segments. Give the most important information first and keep it short.
- Be creative: Don't hesitate to get messy, think outside the box, and follow the student's lead. Upcycle materials and let children create.
- Schedule Breaks: Alternate learning with productive breaks. These breaks can be used to give the child rest, but also to be used as motivation. Do not revoke breaks with non-compliance. They are essential for productivity.
- Allow Movement: Movement can be incorporated into almost every academic task, you just have to get creative. Have a child bounce a ball, jump rope, or swing while reciting math facts or taking a spelling test.
- Provide Alternative Response: Determine if the work needs to be written down. If so, allow the child to verbalize the information and you can write their answers down. The only work that should not be written for the child is a writing assignment in which their writing abilities are being developed.

Concrete Learner

If your child is a concrete learner, they need to be able to read information and write about what they have learned. Note-taking and creating study guides are helpful for these types of learners. They often benefit from multiple sources of text when learning new information.

Strategies:

- Build a home library: Invest in books, or plan to spend a lot of time at the library! E-books are typically not a good option for concrete learners. It activates and utilizes another part of the brain. This is also true about taking notes. These learners often need to write information rather than type their notes. Again, it has to do with how the brain engages in these tasks.

Some children are definitely one type of learner or another, while other children are a combination of multiple. Either way, hopefully these tips will be beneficial for you in educating your child at home.