



Feedback Report

The Learning Styles Indicator

Version I

Philip Cook

15th January 2020



introduction

"Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty".

Henry Ford

"The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn."

Alvin Tofler

We all have preferences for what we learn and how we learn it. For example, some of us prefer to learn in a hands-on and practical way while others enjoy working with abstract theories and complex ideas. Some people prefer to learn by experimenting and others like to use their imagination to guide what they learn.

What this means is that each one of us will naturally have his or her own preferred way of going about any particular learning task. What it also means though is that for each one of us, some types of learning will be more difficult than others. If we are practically inclined, then learning through theory and abstract ideas will be more difficult. If our preference is to learn by accumulating factual information, then when we are asked to use our imagination and insight to think of new ideas, this could be more challenging and difficult.

To put this differently, we each have our own preferred 'learning style' and the purpose of the Learning Styles Indicator is to help you discover which learning style you personally prefer. This can help you in finding ways of learning which suit your style and which will help you to learn most effectively.

However, a further purpose of the Learning Styles Indicator is to help you become aware of alternative styles which are different from your own preferred style. Sometimes in life, we have no choice. Our education or our job may require that we take a different approach.

So to know what we are naturally good at can also help us to know what we are less good at and can show us how we may need to develop our learning skills in order to cope with a variety of different learning tasks and learning content.

When reading your results, do bear in mind that:

These are only suggestions and only define what you seem most comfortable with - not necessarily what you are good at.

Everyone can adapt his/her style to fit different circumstances - although some people find it easier to adapt than others.

Sometimes your answers do not give a clear-cut pattern and so the ideas and suggestions below may not always fit closely - so feel free to identify those that fit and to question those that don't.

If you find yourself questioning the accuracy of the report, before rejecting the suggestions, it can be useful to imagine that they are true for some part of your life. Ask yourself in what situations they might be true or whether they may have been true when you were younger.

The four basic learning styles

The Learning Styles Indicator assumes that there are four basic learning styles: Clarifier, Innovator, Activator and Explorer and these are described briefly below.

Clarifier

- learning in a structured and systematic way
- paying attention to details and facts
- absorbing as much information as possible
- learning via an orderly process with milestones
- posing questions to clarify what has to be learnt and making sure that everything has been considered

Innovator

- using insight and innovation to solve complex problems
- generating new ideas and alternatives
- exploring and developing theories to help understanding
- dealing with abstract concepts rather than practical realities
- taking time to reflect and time to read, research and think
- identifying core issues and inter-relationships

Activator

- emphasising the practical applications of what is learnt
- taking a common-sense and matter-of-fact approach
- focussing on action and a realistic appraisal of the situation
- organising facts, situations and people in order to deliver results
- avoidance of “woolly” thinking and procrastination
- attending to immediate and practical issues and details

Explorer

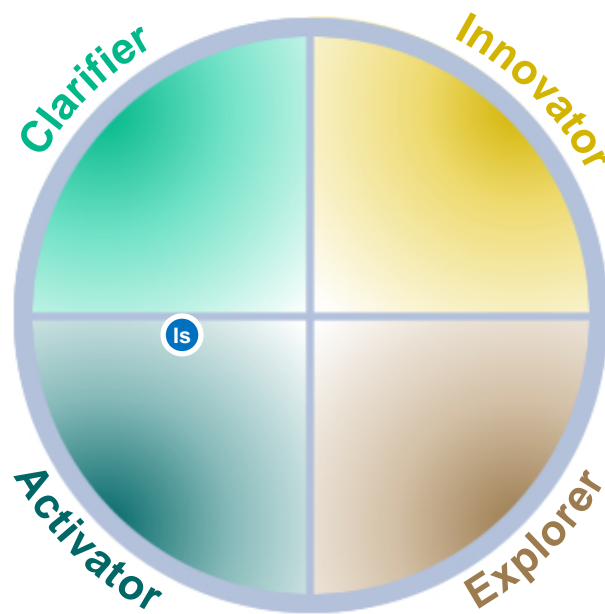
- focussing on the “big picture” rather than the details
- valuing alternatives and being flexible
- valuing inspiration as a source of ideas
- being creative and trying out new things
- seeing variety and change
- learning via active discovery
- continuing to ask questions and refusing to accept simple answers

Remember that no one learning style is 'better' than the others. Nevertheless, a given style may be better suited to a particular learning task than other styles. Also, although you may have a preference for one of the four learning styles, this does not mean to say you are unable to make use of the others.

a summary of your results



Your answers to the questionnaire help to identify which of the four basic learning styles you prefer most. In the diagram below, the blue circle shows your preference.



The closer the blue circle is to the darker coloured regions of the diagram, the clearer your preference is for the learning style in question. As the colours get lighter towards the borders with the other styles, it means that your preference is less clear. Also, if the blue circle is close to the border with another style it may mean that you enjoy (or use) the other style as well – or that you are currently undecided.

The diagram shows that you have a preference for the 'Activator' style and, as a consequence, your least preferred style is likely to be the one opposite which is the 'Innovator' style.

The following pages provide a more detailed description of your preferred learning style.



What Activators might choose to study

People choose to learn things for many different reasons. Sometimes this is because they have had particular experiences; sometimes they are influenced by friends, parents or have particular career interests. However, your learning style can help you to recognise how certain topics could be more naturally and immediately interesting for you. People with the Activator learning style preference often prefer subjects which:

- are structured, contain facts, are practical and useful
- demand high standards
- have consequences rather than just interesting theories
- can be related to their own experience
- provide problems requiring solutions

The learning environment Activators usually prefer

When Activators use their preferred learning style they usually seek an environment which is practical, exciting and which has a clear framework and rules. Too much theory, listening and absence of doing things is likely to make them restless. You may like to consider previous learning situations that you found motivating and stimulating. Activators usually describe situations which involve:

- tangible ideas which they can relate to their own experience
- learning through doing, practising and opportunities to 'have a go'
- working with others to discuss and bounce ideas around
- fast pace with lots of interaction
- clear direction and priorities

- specific instructions
- practical activities and useful outcomes

You are therefore unlikely to find learning rewarding when you are expected to be passive, unable to try things or test the practical aspects of the topic. You may also feel uncomfortable when instructions are ambiguous or unclear, or when you are left alone without sufficient directions and objectives. When engaged in group work your natural style is likely to be practical, quick, decisive with a drive to get results. This is an appropriate and valuable attribute but it also means that you may not always listen actively and you may decide and jump to conclusions too quickly before enough information is available.

You may sometimes benefit from being a little more patient, suspending your judgement, adopting a more questioning style and encouraging contributions from others before offering your own views. This may particularly be the case when you are required to help others to learn when it is important to work at their pace rather than yours.

Your ideal teacher: this will be someone who is practical, realistic and structured. They involve you in the learning process by letting you contribute, discuss, question and try things out. They give you clear instructions and objectives and they deliver with pace and energy. When teaching you “the theory” they give clear, concrete and practical examples. Your best teachers understand your tendency to jump to conclusions and rush into things. They help you avoid unnecessary effort and mistakes by checking that you have listened and understood.

What motivates Activators to learn something new

Everyone needs a purpose and some kind of outcome or benefit from their learning. However, people with different learning styles are likely to have very different reasons and rewards. Activators are likely to want to feel that they have:

- learnt something which has an application
- practised sufficiently to make it tangible and useful
- acquired some new skills
- produced something that is complete and useful
- had adequate opportunity to put the learning into practice

An Activator's most natural talents

An Activator's style can make them particularly good at:

- working with real issues
- converting ideas into action
- grasping basic issues and seeing their practical implications
- being involved and interacting with others
- grasping the facts, handling the detail and engaging in practical activities
- giving or responding to clear instructions and structure

An Activator's least natural talents

Activators have to work harder to:

- see the value in an abstract idea
- be innovative and consider alternatives before moving into action
- deal with ambiguity and incomplete information
- work and study on their own
- suspend judgement

Activators get criticised for:

- attending to the obvious and missing the bigger picture
- jumping in too quickly before all the information is known
- trying things out too soon
- not listening
- becoming frustrated if the pace is too slow
- having pre-conceived ideas which make them less flexible
- being impatient



It has been proposed that all effective learning will go through a cycle of four stages: ACT --> REFLECT --> IMAGINE --> EXPERIMENT. Understanding your learning style in terms of the learning cycle can be very useful and make you a more effective learner.

Each of these four stages is important in the learning process and each is associated with a particular learning style. Therefore, if you know what your preferred learning style is, then you will also know at which stage in the learning cycle you will naturally be at your best. More importantly, you will also know at which stage in the learning process you would expect to do least well. This can help you to understand where in the learning process you may need to make most effort and where you most need to develop your learning skills

The four stages and the learning styles with which they are most associated are as follows.

Stage 1 – ACT

This is the active experience, a period where there is opportunity to learn by involvement, practical activity and 'getting on with it'. Activators are normally at their best in this stage

Stage 2 – REFLECT

This is a period of contemplation and reflection. By reviewing what has (or hasn't) happened and what might need to happen, the current activity can be linked to previous situations, so providing an opportunity to understand and personalise the experience. Clarifiers are normally at their best in this stage.

Stage 3 – IMAGINE

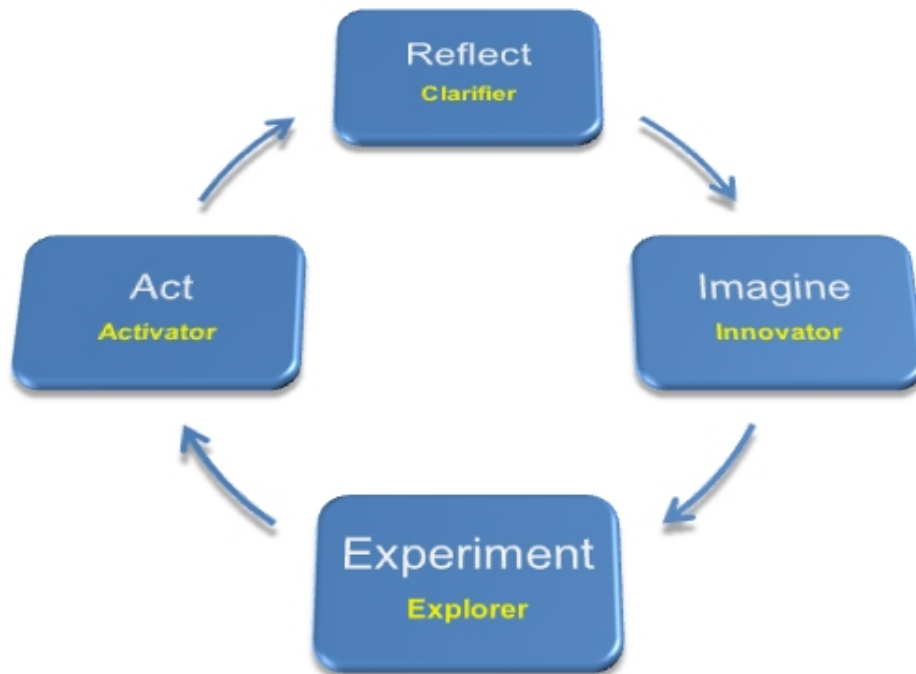
This is a period where new and varied ideas and options can be explored. New ideas are generated, different theories proposed and any potential implications considered. Innovators are normally at their best in this stage.

Stage 4 – EXPERIMENT:

This is a period where the new ideas are explored more actively, perhaps with some trial and error. It is the stage where prototypes, plans and schemes emerge with options and designs for implementation. Explorers are normally at their best in this

stage.

In the following diagram, we can see how the four stages of the learning cycle are linked to the four learning styles.



When engaged in learning, we often like to spend time in the stage which best suits our own learning style and sometimes this causes us to spend insufficient time at the other stages. Effective learning requires that we devote time and attention to each stage and making sure that you do this will considerably enhance your own learning.

Whatever learning style you currently prefer, remember no one style can be thought of as being better or worse than another. You should consider whether the results presented in the report truly reflect your style and preferences. This may help you clarify how you learn best, how you choose what to learn, why you make the choices you do, what environments suit you best and what you could do to improve and enjoy learning more. You may also like to consider how much the questionnaire reflects your natural or dominant style and under what circumstances you use the other three styles.



If you are interested in developing your learning style in order to improve your learning, you may like to consider trying the following exercises:

EXERCISE 1

Activators often like to get stuck into something quickly rather than spending too long thinking and researching. So why not try a different approach for a change. Consider an activity or piece of work you need to produce in the coming days or weeks and do as follows:

- Before it becomes urgent, set some time aside to make an overall plan of what will be involved.
- Consider how the activity might impact other people, especially those who might at first sight not seem to be directly involved. Perhaps there are people who are more affected than you might initially have thought
- If you have a standard approach for the activity in question or one that might seem 'obviously the best', consider a few novel alternatives which you have not tried before and which might have a more acceptable impact on others. Spend some time looking into them and see what you learn.

EXERCISE 2

When in situations where people are thinking through ideas and making plans, Activators normally want to get on and do things and get frustrated by too many ideas, abstract concepts and whatever they consider to be 'inactivity'. So next time you are involved in such a situation, try the following:

- Listen carefully and try not to interrupt or introduce your own ideas too early or so often.
- Notice when you find yourself wanting to state an opinion. Think of how you can turn this into a question that helps others to consider the issues you think are important. For example, instead of saying "I think that's wrong", you might ask "What do you think is right about that and what might be wrong?"

EXERCISE 3

Identify an activity where you feel highly involved and where you feel you have a lot to contribute. Next time you are engaged in it (or something similar) notice the times when you are being highly involved and active and then:

- Stop what you are doing, look around, observe and see what happens
- If necessary, invite someone else to help or do what you would normally be doing
- Consider whether it would create more space and opportunity for others if you held back a bit more

EXERCISE 4

For this exercise, you will need to work with one or two colleagues who have a different learning style from yourself (and who are also interested in developing their approaches). Decide between yourselves on an imaginary project which you have to undertake which will involve each of you learning and implementing something which is new to you. Working independently, each should produce an overview of the steps which will be involved in the project for the team as a whole, a detailed plan for whatever the project has to achieve plus a summary of how you will make your contribution effectively. When you have each done this:

- make a copy for each of the people involved and pass it to them
- examine the others' approaches individually and make notes on how each one differs from your own
- identify things you particularly like and highlight anything that was missing from your own
- discuss the differences between each of your separate approaches
- identify anything you have learnt (either from the learning style report or this exercise) that may help you to vary your style more appropriately

If you would like to answer a few short questions to give us your opinion of this report, please click on the link below:

[Feedback questionnaire](#)