

What's your learning style?

A friend asked me several months ago, "So, Ms. Kitty, what's your learning style?" To be honest, I laughed, and said "My learning has style?" But, now in my seventh week of teaching a marketing class, I have become acutely aware of how we do or don't learn.



There are many studies on learning styles, but this weekend, I read about Neil Fleming (from the Lincoln University, New Zealand) and his theory of learning called VARK. He has developed a questionnaire that creates a profile of your learning preferences and the way you mentally receive and provide information. In his very complex study, Fleming notes four basic types of learners.

- **Visual learners** learn best via pictures, diagrams, illustrations, video, patterns, and colors.
- **Auditory learners** learn best by listening, e.g. lectures, recordings, radio.
- **Reading /writing learners** learn best by reading /writing.
- **Tactile learners** learn best by experience, activity, or experimentation.

As a teacher, my challenge is to incorporate each way of learning in each class so all students are "receiving" on all channels. During preparation of a lesson, this process highlights instructors' "biases," their natural inclination to use one or two familiar ways of sharing information rather than all four learning methods. For the learner, VARK helps them identify their learning style and, in turn, enables them to maximize their educational experience.

After learners complete VARK 's sixteen multiple-choice questions (which takes about four minutes), they are asked a few general questions about themselves. I was most intrigued by whether the VARK profiles matched learners' personal perception of their own learning styles. From more than twenty years of VARK responses:

- 58% thought VARK matched their leaning style.
- 38% were unsure if VARK had, in fact, identified their learning style.
- 4% said VARK had not matched their learning style.

So, is VARK reliable? Can it be of any use to the library community? Have a go; it's quick and free! Take the questionnaire, and let me know what you think. Can you guess what my learning style is? What's yours?

<http://www.vark-learn.com/english/page.asp?p=questionnaire>

Have a swell week! Spring is coming, but I think I said that last week, too!

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