

Learn More about Yourself as a Learner

Introduction

How you learn can be just as important as *what* you learn. Yet most people haven't spent much time thinking about or discovering what their learning style is or what specific learning strategies will work best for them.

In addition, some people are impacted by learning disabilities – about 15% of adults. Not everyone is aware of what learning disabilities are. Basically, learning disabilities affect how you get, organize, retain, understand, or use information. Some people are identified as having learning disabilities when they are in school. Many, however, are not, and are unclear why they struggle to do some learning tasks but not others.

In this module, we present tools and resources to help you identify your learning style(s) as well as learning strategies that are specific to the way(s) you learn best. We share some basic information about what learning disabilities are and what supports you might be able to get at the college level. And last, but not least, we share some information about how you can advocate for your own learning needs.

Check Your Skills

First, let's check your understanding of yourself as a learner. We'll then come back and see how you feel at the end of the module. Read each of the statements below and select the response that best describes you today.

Statements	I can do this	I would like to do this better	I can't do this
I can describe my learning style(s)			
I can describe some learning strategies for my learning style(s)			
I know what learning disabilities are			
I know what learning disability and other supports exist at the college I will be attending			
I know how to advocate for my learning needs			

Learning Styles

Each person has different learning styles that benefit them. Some may find they have a dominant learning style. Others may find that they prefer different learning styles in different circumstances. There is no right or wrong answer to which learning style is best for you. By understanding your own style of learning and thinking, you can be more efficient in studying and learning.

There are three main learning styles that most people fit into.

You're a **visual learner** if you learn best by looking at charts, pictures and infographics. If you can "see" the information in your mind, you'll probably remember it. Visual style learners learn best by seeing.

You're an **auditory learner** if you learn best when you can chat about what's on the test. Conversation (even if you're talking to yourself!) helps you remember your notes better than reading them quietly. Auditory style learners learn best by hearing.

You're a **kinesthetic/tactile learner** if typical study methods have not worked for you but once you start getting hands-on experience, you've got it. Kinesthetic style learners learn best by moving and doing.

Don't worry if more than one of these learning styles sounds right. You could be a blend of two or more.

If you want to learn about your preferred learning style you can take a survey at the link below.

Click on this link to access the survey:

<http://www.educationplanner.org/students/self-assessments/learning-styles-quiz.shtml>

Tips for Visual Learners

Visual learners remember and learn what they see the most. Visual learners learn best by visualizing the information. So, your study methods should make it easy to "see" the concepts you'll be tested on. Here's what to do.

- Use charts and graphs whenever you can. As a visual learner you should use as many visual cues as possible. Organizing the test material into easy-to-understand graphs will make them easier to remember.
- Colour code your notes. Some types of information just don't work in chart form – but you can still add visual cues to your notes with colour. Use highlighters or markers to group similar information by colour, so you'll more clearly link it together in your memory.

- Write outlines and summaries. Sure, you can't "see" several pages' worth of notes in your mind – but maybe you can visualize a one-page outline or summary. Making an outline for each chapter (or the materials for each test) may help you retain the information better.

Tips for Auditory Learners

Auditory learners learn best by hearing and carefully listening. Learning by listening and talking puts you at an advantage, since lectures should be extra effective study aids for you. Here's how to make the most of your study sessions.

- Go to every class – and pay attention! You'll have an easier time learning in-class than the average person, so take advantage of it.
- Find a quiet place to study. As an auditory learner, you're prone to picking up anything that's going on in the background – and getting distracted from your study goals. If you can't find a place to study that's totally quiet, try listening to white noise or using noise-cancelling headphones.
- Talk it out. You'll learn most effectively by talking about the test material (and listening to someone else chat about it). So find a study buddy to review your notes with – talking through the concepts will cement them in your mind.

Tips for Kinesthetic/Tactile Learners

A kinesthetic/tactile learner learns best by going through the motions or actually doing something. When they are actively moving their body and combining that with what they are learning, it's much easier for them to internalize the information. Here's how to study most effectively as a hands-on learner.

- Use a dedicated study space. Getting into the right mindset is especially key for kinesthetic learners, and you can get your mind into the study zone by having a dedicated study space. Try finding your favourite corner of the library or set up a desk at home that you use only for studying so you know when you sit down, it's time to work.
- Feel free to fidget. We'll be honest, most test material doesn't allow for much "hands on" learning. But repetitive physical activities can make it easier for you to concentrate and recall the information later. So chew gum, play with a ball or fiddle with your keys while you study since it'll help you stay focused.
- Find a study buddy. Need to take a more hands-on role in your studying? Try playing teacher and explain the test concepts to your study buddy to better engage with the study materials. You can also try this technique alone by pretending you're lecturing to a packed classroom.

Learning Disabilities and Accommodation Supports

Learning disabilities affect one or more of the ways that a person takes in, stores, or uses information. Learning disabilities come in many forms and affect people with varying levels of severity. Between 5 and 10 percent of Canadians have a learning disability. Learning disabilities are a life-long condition – they do not go away – but can be coped with successfully by using areas of strength to compensate and accommodations such as technology.

A quick example: a student could have a learning disability that affected her reading and understanding. She knows how to read, but the process of decoding the words and sentences takes so much effort that she comprehends little of what she's read. This student has learned that this is the case, and now records lectures to listen to later, and listens to audio-books on tape and CD. She has compensated by using her strong listening skills.

Learning disabilities and their effects are different from person to person, so a person's pattern of learning abilities needs to be understood to find good, effective strategies for compensation.

For more information about learning disabilities visit the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario's website at: <https://www.ldao.ca>.

You can expect college to be very different from high school. The work will be more demanding – both in quality and in depth. There will be less class time, more study time, less feedback from instructors, and less supervision. On the one hand there will be more academic and personal freedom; on the other there will be more academic and personal responsibility. Levels of support available on campus will vary widely from minimal to satisfactory. However, with appropriate accommodations and support, and a lot of hard work, students with learning disabilities can have success at college.

Accommodations

If you require extra support with your learning, it is up to you to ensure that you receive the accommodations which are appropriate and necessary for you. Extra time for tests and exams is the most common request, and perhaps one of the easiest to satisfy. There should also be access to word processors, academic counselling and personal and financial counselling, if required. It is important for students with a learning disability to take advantage of all that the Student Support Centre at the college has to offer. Many students come to college planning to 'do it all by myself'. Make sure you ask for the support you need to be successful.

The types of accommodations for learning disabilities that are provided at college include:

- Extended time for tests and exams
- Reduced course load
- Course counselling
- Electronic or taped textbooks
- Text-to-voice software
- Voice-to-text software
- Reader (support person)
- Scribe for oral work (support person)
- Specialized organizational tour
- Tape recording of lectures

Before you meet with someone from Student Services at the college, think about what you need help with and what strategies might support you. For example:

- I have a hard time focusing when there is a limited amount of time. I could use extra time for a test.
- I have a hard time focusing when there are distractions. I would like to have tests in a separate room by myself.
- I have a hard time taking notes when someone is talking. I would like to have someone in the class share their notes with me.

Further Modules

Now that you've learned more about yourself as a learner it's time to explore what other areas of the Toolkit may be of use to you. If you haven't already done so, we invite you to use the [Check Your Learning Tool](#). This tool will highlight any additional learning needs you might have. By targeting specific areas of learning that will be important to your success in college-level programming, you will be as prepared as possible for success.

Material in this section was sourced from:

The Best Study Tips for Every Type of Learner (<https://sciening.com/the-best-study-tips-for-every-type-of-learner-13717482.html>)

Study Skills for Students (<https://www.educationcorner.com/learning-styles.html>)

Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario
(<https://www.ldao.ca/introduction-to-ldsadhd/what-are-lds/>)

Recheck Your Skills

Now that you've completed the module, let's see how you feel about how well you know yourself as a learner. Read each of the statements below and select the response that best describes you.

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