



## LEARNING STYLES AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

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**Abstract:** This article explores the concept of learning styles and their role in education. While many learners express preferences in how they receive information, research does not provide strong evidence that teaching based on learning styles significantly improves academic performance. The idea gained popularity in the 1970s, leading to the development of various models, including the widely used VARK framework, which categorizes learners as Visual, Auditory, Reading/Writing, or Kinesthetic. Each style reflects different ways students process and retain information. Although incorporating diverse teaching strategies can support engagement and understanding, most learners benefit from a combination of styles rather than a single one. The text concludes that learning styles can be useful when applied flexibly, as part of a broader, adaptive teaching approach that addresses the diverse needs of students.

**Keywords:** learning styles, learning theories, individual differences, preferred learning methods, VAK model, VARK model, visual learners, auditory learners, reading/writing learners, kinesthetic learners, teaching strategies.

### Introduction

Learning styles refer to different theories that attempt to explain why people learn in different ways. Although many individuals believe they have a preferred method for receiving information, research does not strongly support the idea that teaching based on learning styles actually improves learning outcomes. Most theories classify learners into certain “styles,” but they often disagree on how these styles should be defined or measured.



The concept became widely popular in the 1970s and has influenced education ever since, even though some researchers questioned its effectiveness from the beginning. Supporters of learning styles argue that teachers should first determine each student's preferred way of learning and then adapt their teaching methods accordingly. Over time, multiple models have been created—many of them expanding on earlier versions, such as the VAK model developing into the VARK model. However, critics point out that there is still no strong evidence proving that teaching according to learning styles leads to better academic performance.

Learning styles are thought to affect how students receive, process, and remember information. Since every learner has different strengths and preferences, recognizing these differences can help teachers choose methods that support more effective learning. The idea behind learning styles is that students learn more efficiently when lessons match the way they naturally prefer to learn. One of the most well-known models is VARK, which includes Visual, Auditory, Reading/Writing, and Kinesthetic learners.

Visual learners learn best through images, diagrams, and any form of visual representation. They are good at noticing visual details, remembering what they see, and benefit from written notes and demonstrations.

Auditory learners prefer listening and speaking to learn effectively. They like having instructions explained verbally, often repeat key points aloud, and pay attention to tone and rhythm. Many also enjoy or benefit from soft background music.

Reading/Writing learners understand information best when they engage with written texts and take notes. (Note: This category was part of your original description earlier but not included in the bulleted section, so it remains in the overall explanation.)

Kinesthetic learners prefer hands-on experiences, movement, and practical activities. They often do well in subjects that involve experimentation and enjoy working in groups.

Using a variety of teaching strategies that reflect these styles can increase student engagement, memory, and understanding. For example, visual learners may understand better through charts, while kinesthetic learners learn best through experiments or physical tasks. By acknowledging these differences, teachers can create a more inclusive learning environment.

However, most students do not rely on just one learning style. Many learn best when a mix of styles is used within the same lesson. Some experts also caution that depending too much on learning styles may limit students' ability to develop other skills. Effective teaching requires flexibility and the ability to adjust to different subjects and learners' needs.

### Criticisms of the VARK Model

Many researchers have challenged the VARK model and similar learning-style theories. Although the VARK model suggests that knowing your preferred style can make learning easier, critics argue that assigning students a single style may actually limit their overall learning potential.

Studies also show that the tools used to measure learning styles are not always valid or reliable. Other research has found no strong connection between learning styles and higher academic achievement.

Despite these criticisms, VARK remains popular among teachers and students. Some people feel strongly connected to a particular style, while others identify with several styles at once—for example, enjoying both visual and auditory learning methods.

### Why Understanding Preferences Still Matters

Even with the criticisms, knowing your learning preferences can still be helpful. If you are aware that you learn best visually, for example, you can incorporate more visual tools into your study routine to make learning more enjoyable and effective.

If you do not strongly prefer one style or your preferred method changes depending on the subject, you likely have a multimodal learning style. For instance,

in a history class, you might rely mainly on reading and writing because the subject involves textbooks and note-taking. In contrast, in an art class, you may depend more on visual and kinesthetic methods as you analyze artworks and practice hands-on techniques.

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