A VARK Learning Profile for Example

You have a very strong Visual learning preference.

You have a very strong Visual, single preference for learning. The gap between your Visual score of 9 and your next highest score of 3 for Aural is large enough to indicate that, while you are quite capable of learning using each of these four VARK modes, the Visual mode is your first preference. This means that you usually begin with the Visual representations of learning and that you use those Visual strategies more often, as this profile will explain.

DATA TABLE FOR THOSE WITH A VISUAL PREFERENCE
(October 2018)
n=148677

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mild</td>
<td>1363</td>
<td>794</td>
<td>2157</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strong</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>631</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very strong</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The total number of people who provided sex information was 86946.

There are not many of you!

Some general points about those who have a single Visual preference like you. They have a number of ways to use their preference to learn.

1. They need to use only their preferred mode for major decisions and for learning. They say they are decisive and they are confident that their learning decisions using that mode are the "right" ones for them. They may resist using other modes.

2. This does not mean that they use only their single mode. Communication is always multimodal. They will be using their other preferred modes but they will play a lesser part in their learning.

3. They may have some flexibility to switch from mode to mode, based, not only on the circumstances, but also on other factors - mode, time of day, need for a decision, empathy for others involved... But their single mode will be their main preference. It will be used first and it will be the one that is at the centre of their learning decisions and behaviours.

I suggest that at this point in your reading, you go to the end of this profile and look at the Helpsheets for V, A, R and K. Start with the Visual list. You should underline or check those that you use regularly. Return here when you have finished. You will probably have checked most strategies in your main list and a few strategies in some of the other lists.
YOUR LEARNING PROFILE

You should remember that information does not normally come packaged in a single mode - life is multimodal. When you are faced with a learning situation that requires Aural or Read/Write or Kinesthetic skills you will probably translate those into your Visual mode. Information in higher education seldom comes in a Visual format so translating has to become a habit. You are not as flexible as many others and you might prefer to use one particular mode for certain things that “you think” need to be conveyed that way. If you rely too much on your Visual mode your learning may suffer but it can be made stronger.

You are less flexible in the way that you receive information from others and you probably switch to accommodate the way that they are presenting to you. If someone emails or phones you, your Aural score of 3 means that you place some importance on what is said and what you say. So self-talk, lectures, discussions, debates, meetings and recitation are somewhat secondary but still useful Aural learning strategies for you. Your Read/write score is 2 and that may be helpful in academic learning so if somebody wants to give you some print sources about a new concept (Read/write) you are willing to use those as well.

Your first preference is Visual and that means that you are keen to use all the graphic and spatial strategies that you can - like this diagram above. You often reach for a piece of paper to explain something and you are acutely aware of where you are in space and what comprises your immediate environment. You are "spatially aware" of yourself and the environment around you. You want others to give you the "big picture" so that you can fit your current learning into that overall schema. You like to know how information fits into the wider picture. You want the big picture first and the detail later.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Your single preference has both advantages and disadvantages. You can learn things quickly when they are in your mode and you can often be quite certain of them without having to check their accuracy in other modes. This makes you quite different from most of those around you who are multimodal (60% of our database). Students with four similar preferences (multimodals) can make choices in class. They can match the modes being used by their teachers or the modes used in a particular discipline. They may switch modes. That is more difficult for you especially if your teachers do not use diagrams, graphs, and charts.

You may use just your Visual mode when you believe that nothing else is required, but more often you should realize that you need confirming information in other modes. You may be in a minority when explaining things your way, or when understanding things presented in an Aural, Read/Write or Kinesthetic way. The advantage that you have is that when you do learn something, you learn it quickly - as long as it comes in your mode. The main disadvantage is that when information comes in the Aural, Read/Write or Kinesthetic modes you are less inclined to use it, value it, or believe it. You may find it difficult to learn if you cannot translate that input into the Visual modes that you use more effectively.

If you are a student, you are strongly advantaged when you meet a teacher who can teach using your Visual strategies. You like subjects that can be taught and learned in a Visual way, such as: economics, physics, logic, art, geography, biology, physiology, geometry, computer systems - any subjects where layout, placement, spatial linkages, maps, flow charts and graphical analysis are important. There are fewer opportunities to learn visually in most educational establishments. Read/write students find life easier when their education uses print sources, lists and textbooks. You may have learned how to shift any input from Read/write sources into your Visual learning strategies.
NOTE TAKING AND NOTE MAKING

When you take notes you need to translate that input quickly into diagrams. Those with a strong Visual preference are able to convert text or talk into their own diagrams. They listen for some key words that have strong visual associations. Some can develop this skill so that they can draw the diagrams as the teacher speaks or as they read. Others have to take down the words as text and convert them into diagrams later. Here are some examples:

The teacher said:

"Our brain absorbs images in different ways."

I drew:

The brain reacts differently to these three inputs.

"There is a link between smoking and the incidence of lung cancer."

"Between selling your house and buying the next one you may need bridging finance."

The first stage in gathering information for learning is called note taking because you are merely collecting notes from your teachers, textbooks, friends and webpages. In the Visual helpsheet below we have suggested that you should convert those notes by reducing them (three pages reduced to one page). This stage is called note making. To do this you should use designs, symbols and drawings that make sense to you. Not all students take their notes in the same way and some students who have a strong Visual preference have developed special diagrams and forms of shorthand to represent both common and complex ideas. You need to develop your own special diagrams to help your brain to remember your notes. Your brain needs your help so make every page and diagram look different. Design your symbols and abbreviations like icons on a computer.

You enjoy teachers who provide you with maps, diagrams and graphic images that illustrate the subjects you are learning. You should convert any notes that you are given into diagrams using small symbols (stars, arrows, outline boxes etc) to organize your main ideas. Using different fonts, font sizes and font styles will provide you with plenty of visual variety and make things easier to remember.

- Avoid lists
- and bullet points
- because
- to you
- they all look the same.

You may even print things sideways for effect, or use Word Art.

All text seems the same for those with a Visual preference so handwritten notes may be better than printed notes.

Personalise your own records as much as possible.
Make your notes look different from everyone else's notes.
Some examples are shown later in this profile.
The placement of things on a page of your notes is important because you are better able to remember "what" by using "where."
Take mental photographs of your pages and your memory will assist in recalling a detail on a page by its placement. Centering, right justifying and arranging key words in innovative ways works for you. Color too is important. One student helped to remember key ideas by writing all her Economics notes in red pen, and all her Biology notes in black pen. The color codes helped her recall. It was as though her brain stored things in different places according to color. So Economics and Biology did not get confused.

Cartoons are helpful for those who have a strong Visual preference especially if the meaning in the cartoon is in the drawing rather than in the text bubbles. Find cartoons that you can add meaning to with your own words.

Remember that video and television are not necessarily useful for those who are strongly Visual (V) because much of the information in these media is Aural (A), Kinesthetic (K) or even written (R). Students with a Visual preference get little help from unstructured images like photographs or films. Videos showing things that you can learn are useful for your Kinesthetic preference. Also be wary of those who use PowerPoint. Some students with a strong Visual preference are distracted by the way electronic information appears and disappears. Most of the content in PowerPoint is little more than words. There are usually few diagrams even though the text may be shown in interesting (and diverting!) ways. PowerPoint is often referred to as a visual medium but in terms of modal preferences it is usually filled with text and favors students who have a Read/write preference.

**WORKING WITH OTHER LEARNERS**

If you are well matched with others who have a Visual preference (V) there will be no problems with communicating ideas and instructions because you will both be reaching for pieces of paper to sketch designs, or directions, or ideas. Those who prefer visual input are often keen to see an overview of the situation in a diagram whether it is a customer complaint or a design fault in a system. They mentally convert text and speech into pictures, schemas or images that make more sense in their world. If you are working with someone who has some Visual preference too, it will be important to draft any plans or new ideas in a Visual way. You prefer charts and graphs over tables of figures so translate percentages and ratios into pie or line graphs. Sometimes those with a Visual preference appear to be inattentive. They may be forming a visual representation of what is being said or what is written. You can sometimes observe them reaching for a pen and paper to start drawing something or thinking about a suitable image. They may design their information using symbols as in this example:

![Diagram Example]

Those with a Visual preference like to "see" relationships and they often choose to use words like, "link", "draw", "vision", "view", "see" or "perspective". They have a strong spatial sense and are often able to find their way when others cannot. They are usually aware of their surroundings, especially the layout of rooms or houses or outdoor spaces. They may have a strong sense of color, location, placement, even negative space and they enjoy working with maps, signs and anything that is symbolic (flags, logos, road signs, advertisements, designs and plans). Some can use their preference to remember people's faces but not their names!

Those with a strong single Visual preference appear to be a small proportion of the total population but they are an important group because of the extensive use of visual symbolism in our, and other societies. The familiar visual elements such as space, color and representation are often the distinguishing features of different societies and our symbols tend to be drawn with a strong cultural influence. Even within a culture, visual conventions change, probably faster than some word meanings. Graphics are closely linked with trends and fashions and they are often the subject of competitive development as in the current race to design new fonts for text! The commercial strength of visual images can be seen in fashion, marketing and branding.
As individuals, we all possess a visual vocabulary but it is highly personal because the conventions are not as strongly formalized as for text. There are few visual dictionaries that might indicate what symbols mean although there are a number of internationally accepted signs. The separation of text and pictures, and the so-called higher status of text, makes for a division that is unhelpful for learners. It would be more helpful if those with a Visual preference were recognized as being different rather than disabled. We should reward those who use their Visual preferences to extend their understanding of the written and spoken word. They often have highly developed abilities to transform knowledge from one mode to another and should be encouraged to continue that process. It is probably our society’s insistence that things must be written down that imposes restrictions on their learning.

You chose 3 for the Aural mode. This preference helps when you choose discussion, email, phone conversations, asking questions, and texting as well as listening to lectures and teachers. People with this preference like oral stories and anecdotes that provide examples of learning. Finding somebody to listen and respond is a useful strategy for this preference. You use this mode when you seek experts to get advice. You can learn by talking things through, and that includes self-talk.

Your score of 2 was for the Read/write mode. It offers more strategies for you to use. Having Read/write as a part of your profile of preferences is helpful because formal learning in education establishments has many opportunities to use that preference. Many teachers have Read/write as their highest preference. You should put details into written form and use lists, PowerPoint, textbooks, diaries and the Internet for your ideas. Make use of handouts by adding diagrams to them. Use some of the strategies from the helpsheets that are listed for Read/write learners.

Your score for the Kinesthetic mode is 0 which is a low score and means the strategies are not very useful for you. Use the strategies for your Visual and other preferences.

STUDENT CASE STUDIES

I have provided here some student case studies based on your preferred mode.

Till recently I had only been learning things by writing information down and revising it for exams. I made myself learn this way. It was really hard. Art history, geography and design were different in that I would associate a single picture or a diagram with the text to help me understand or to aid revision. I also found that I learned more from teachers with personal experience in what they were teaching. Field trips were good because in an exam you could visualise what you were writing about.

Cameron 18 yrs

I find it easier when taking notes and learning about something when it has pictures, diagrams and or examples with it. For example I find it easier to look at the slides we are talking about. In subjects like economics or maths at school I needed examples of theories in real life situations or diagrams that explained things step-by-step. I hate to read books and take notes from what I am reading because I can never decipher what is important. Therefore my notes get longer and harder to learn from. However once I have notes in point form, simplified right down I find it easier to revise and learn.

Jodi 17 yrs

From the VARK test it shows that I am visually oriented with a similar approach to Kinesthetic. I like to look at visual information as opposed to solid blocks of text because they hold more interest for me and are easier to recall.

Karl 18 yrs

A VISUAL PREFERENCE

- I am very strongly Visual and learn by the layout on the page mainly. In an exam situation I can identify the question with information that we have been given in lectures by extracting the page and its layout.
- Headings are a strong focal point and enable me to determine which is the page that I need to complete the question asked for.
- Diagrams and flow charts are also very easy for me to learn, as are lists and numbers.
- As far as Aural is concerned, it goes in one ear and out the other. I have to write it down quickly and then I will write it again in my own format, e.g. when taking telephone messages I write the message down as I get it but will religiously rewrite the message so that it looks nice and is arranged on the paper neatly.
As far as reading is concerned I could think of nothing worse than a piece of paper that is all one colour and has no indentations. I would learn nothing, as I would not read it. I do love to read novels, but I remember the book by the visual images I have made rather than the words used, or the authors name and title etc. I was disappointed with a film because I had an image from reading the book that was different from the actor in the film.

On a page I love to indent, use (a), (b) or numbers and have headings that are underlined. With major headings I write in one colour and underline in another. For small headings I use the same colour.

I have a lot of color displayed in all my notes, and buying highlighters is as essential as buying the weekly groceries.

I remember the swot notes by the points involved (I have already made my own swot notes from notes to lists, graphs, flow chart formats with lots of color). For example, with my charts, I would remember that:

1) Diagram 1 has 4 points
2) Diagram 2 has 6 points.
3) Diagram 3 has 7 points.
4) Diagram 4 has 5 points.

My favourite pastime is going to the movies. Understanding now, through the education system the way I learn best, this pastime fits perfectly into my preferred way of learning. As I write this paper I can say that I have been to three movies in the last week and that is not unusual.

If you want me to learn something, show me using colour and variations on the page, and then make me physically do it!!, as I also have a touch of Kinesthetic in me!

LASTLY, SOME GENERAL POINTS ABOUT WHAT VARK INDICATES AND WHAT IT DOES NOT.

1. VARK is not a definitive measure. With only 16 questions, it indicates your preferences for the ways in which learning is “taken in” and expressed (as in examinations, trials and tests).

2. VARK provides information about your Preferences that may not be the same as your Strengths. Although you may be a skilled artist you may not choose “Visual” as your way to learn new information. Similarly there are skilled athletes who prefer not to learn using their Kinesthetic mode although they will use that mode extensively when performing/playing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preferences</th>
<th>I am good at it.</th>
<th>I am not good at it.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like it.</td>
<td>Go for it! Continue with your present strategies. Enhance them.</td>
<td>Develop it. Practice it. Use it. Try it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t like it.</td>
<td>Leave it till later. Motivation will void it.</td>
<td>Discard it. Don’t go there.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. VARK is about learning not leisure. For example, most learners can read, and many may read quite widely - on the web, in magazines, in text messages and other print media. That reading may be done for leisure rather than for learning and the difference is important. Your VARK scores indicate how you like to take-in and express information in learning situations.

4. Similarly VARK is not informative about mundane and routine tasks, where the emphasis is on mere maintenance or performance of regular duties not learning something new.

5. It is important that you answered the questionnaire for yourself and without considering others. VARK is best when it records how you respond when you learn. It is not as helpful when you consider other people’s needs before your own. While empathy is an admirable trait it clouds your own preferences.
6 Nobody works in a single mode and very little of our communication is possible in a single mode. For example, when a person is describing orally, they are most certainly gesturing and using language that may be visually interesting or have an example that would suit a person with a Kinesthetic preference.

7 The use of the word "Visual" confuses many users of VARK. When used in connection with VARK it is carefully and differently defined to mean learning from symbolic information (graphs, charts, diagrams, maps...) The word "graphic" is probably a better term for this mode. It does not include visual information that is real e.g. photographs, movies, and video are more helpful for those with a Kinesthetic preference.

HELPSHEETS

I have provided the four VARK Helpsheets for your easy reference. I suggest that you go through the lists and tick or underline or color (!) the items that suit your learning preference and then look at some of the other strategies to add to your repertoire of skills. Start with the Visual one.
VISUAL HELPSHEET

If you have a strong preference for Visual (V) learning you should use some or all of these to take in information:

### INTAKE
To take in information use some of these:

- maps
- overviews, flowcharts
- charts, graphs, diagrams
- designs, patterns, posters, ...
- symbols, highlighters, underlining
- different colors, colorful brochures
- textbooks with diagrams, models, maps, ...
- word pictures - e.g. "marching up the slopes"
- different spatial arrangements on the page (like this list)
- listening to teachers who use gestures and picturesque language.
- whitespace that makes the blank areas around text more significant.
- colorful language e.g. "crashing out of space", "circling like vultures"...

### SWOT: STUDY WITHOUT TEARS
To make a learnable package:

Convert your notes into a learnable package by reducing them. Make three pages into one page using your diagrams.

- Turn tables into graphs.
- Draw pictures to show ideas.
- Logos, designs, WordArt, symbols.
- Read the words and convert them into diagrams.
- Make complex processes and lists into flowcharts.
- Redraw your newly designed pages from memory.
- Replace the words with symbols, pictures or initials.
- Look at your pages. Remember their shape and format and color.
- Use all the techniques above to make each study page look different
- Reconstruct the images in different ways - try different spatial arrangements on the page.

### OUTPUT
To perform well in the examination:

- Practise turning your visuals back into words.
- You still have to practise writing exam answers.
- Recall the "pictures" made by your study pages.
- Draw things. Use diagrams to answer the questions.
- Recall the interesting and different formats of the pages you made.

You like to see the whole picture so you need some overall diagram to make sense of complex material. You like to see where you are up to. You are often convinced by the look of an object. You are interested in color, layout and design. You are probably going to draw something.
AURAL HELPSHEET

If you have a strong preference for learning by Aural and Oral methods (listening and speaking) you should use some or all of the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTAKE</th>
<th>To take in information:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>use email and cellphones.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explain new ideas to others.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explain what happened to others.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discuss topics with other students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discuss topics with your teachers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use a tape recorder so you can listen again and again.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>text a summary of the main points of the class to a friend.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attend as many classes and teaching sessions as you can.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leave spaces in your class notes for later recall and 'filling'.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attend discussion groups and other opportunities to share ideas with others.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>describe the overheads, pictures and other visuals to somebody who was not there.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>remember the interesting examples, stories, and jokes... that people use to explain things.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SWOT: STUDY WITHOUT TEARS</th>
<th>To make a learnable package:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convert your notes into a learnable package by reducing them (three pages into one page) into memorable ways for you to hear.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read your summarized notes aloud.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain your notes to another 'aural' person.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask others to 'hear' your understanding of a topic.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk about your learning to others or to yourself.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put your summarized notes onto tapes and listen to them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your notes may be poor because you prefer to listen rather than take notes. You will need to expand your notes by talking with others and collecting notes from the textbook.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUTPUT</th>
<th>To perform well in the examination:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practise speaking your answers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to your voices and write them down.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tune into your teachers talking about the topics.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend time in quiet places recalling the big ideas.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the system allows it, choose an oral examination for your learning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You may still have to practise writing answers to old exam questions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagine you are talking with the teacher as you write your answers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You would prefer to have this entire page explained to you. The written words are not as valuable as those you hear. You will probably go and tell somebody about this. You want to discuss some issues in it.
READ/WRITE HELPSHEET

If you have a strong preference for learning by Reading and Writing (R) you should use some or all of the following:

INTAKE
To take in information:

- lists.
- notes.
- essays.
- reports.
- contracts.
- textbooks.
- glossaries.
- definitions.
- quotations.
- dictionaries.
- PowerPoint.
- printed handouts.
- wordy mind maps.
- readings - library.
- laboratory manuals.
- websites and webpages.
- pay attention to the meanings in headings.
- taking class notes (verbatim).
- computer and other mechanical manuals.
- listening to teachers who use words well and who have lots of information in sentences and notes.

SWOT: STUDY WITHOUT TEARS
To make a learnable package:

- Convert your notes into a learnable package by reducing them. Three pages down to one page.
- Write out the words again and again.
- Read your notes (silently) again and again.
- Do the "extra" reading requested by the teacher.
- Rewrite the ideas and principles into other words.
- Organize any diagrams, graphs... into statements e.g. "The trend is...".
- Use a wordprocessor to arrange your ideas and to 'play' with words.
- Turn reactions, actions, diagrams, charts and flow diagrams into words.
- Imagine your lists arranged in multiple-choice questions and distinguish each from each.

OUTPUT
To perform well in the examination:

- Write exam answers.
- Re-order your lists into priority order.
- Practice with multiple-choice questions.
- Refer to publications - citing references.
- Use your word processor to prepare answers.
- Write your notes into lists (a, b, c, d, 1,2,3,4,).
- Write paragraphs; their beginnings and endings.
- Arrange your words into hierarchies and bullet points.
- Search the Internet for new ideas and confirmation of old ones.

You like this page because the emphasis is on words and lists. You believe the meanings are within the words, so talk is OK, but books are better. You are heading for the library for more books to read or you are going to write to somebody about this.
If you have a strong preference for **Kinesthetic** learning you should use some or all of the following:

### INTAKE

To take in information:

- field trips.
- case studies.
- trial and error.
- applied opportunities.
- examples of principles.
- do things to understand them.
- exhibits, samples, photographs...
- laboratories and practical sessions.
- teachers who give real-life examples.
- hands-on approaches (e.g. computing).
- recipes - solutions to problems, previous exam papers.
- use all your senses - sight, touch, taste, smell, hearing.
- videos and pictures, especially showing real things.
- National Geographic and the History channel.
- collections of, signatures, plants, shells, grasses, stamps, or letters.
- listen for the examples. They hold the key to understanding the abstract bits.

### SWOT: STUDY WITHOUT TEARS

To make a learnable package:

Convert your notes into a learnable package by reducing them - three pages down to one page.

- Remember the "real" things that happened.
- Talk about your notes with another "K" person.
- Search for the reality and the applications in any ideas.
- Go back to the laboratory or your lab manual or your practical notes.
- Use case studies and applications to help with principles and abstract concepts.
- Find pictures and photographs that illustrate an abstract idea, theory or principle.
- Your class notes may be poor because the topics were not "concrete" or "relevant".
- Recall the experiments, field trips... from which you learned the applications and turned them into principles.

### OUTPUT

To perform well in the examination:

- Role-play the exam situation in your own study room.
- Put plenty of examples into your notes and your answers.
- Write practice answers, paragraphs. You cannot avoid writing.
- You want to experience the exam so that you can understand it.
- Recall previous examinations especially those where you did well.

*You like the ideas above because they emphasize examples and real, concrete things. You enjoy learning by doing things and trying things out for yourself. Practicing and experimenting is your way of trying things. You are probably going to try some of the ideas mentioned above to see if they really work.*