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<!-- Col Count:2-->Module:	Personal Development and Well-Being
Skill:	How You Like to Learn

Overview: How You Like to Learn

Learning preferences give you the chance to make the most of each of your learning opportunities. Whether it is a class, seminar or lecture, researching alone, or preparing for assessment, your learning preferences can guide how you work. On a practical level, this will save you valuable time and energy: if you are working in a way that suits you, you will be learning effectively and to maximum effect. On the level of outcomes, you should achieve higher grades more easily, because your mind is in optimal learning mode.

Getting to know your learning preferences can do more than this: by working within your preference, your emotional learning journey is easier. You are more likely to feel comfortable in your learning space (both physical and emotional) and you will find your path towards achievement is more straightforward. One of the keys to unlocking success as a student is to take control whenever you can. Using your learning preferences to good effect is one way to take control.

You might have noticed here that I am using the term ‘learning preferences’ rather than ‘learning styles’, and that reflects the history of this concept in education. Learning styles were first explored in the 1970s by an educational theorist called David Kolb, who was looking at experiential learning – that is, how each of our learning experiences, can, with suitable reflection and conceptualisation, feed into our next learning experience, so developing us as learners. Since then, two flaws have become obvious with this approach: firstly, it is not possible (or even necessarily very useful) for a lecturer or tutor to design a collective learning experience (such as a seminar) to suit particular learning styles; secondly, and more importantly, human beings are not amenable to being classified so rigidly. We are very complicated creatures and under the stress of trying to absorb and use information we become even more complicated.

It is the same as personality types. You are either extravert or introvert, but this is a sliding scale, and for good reason. If you were 100% extravert, you would be manic and quite unable to function: if you were 100% introvert you would, equally, be unable to live in the outside world. So, you might find yourself with a preference for extraversion, and you will want to make the most of that, but you will also recognise that there will be times when you will display introvert characteristics, and you can enjoy that side of yourself too. We can all work within several preference areas.

Some of the approaches described here are those that you will already be taking, because you are already a learner working naturally within your preferences. Sometimes the changes you make as a result of this section will be tiny (but still potentially powerful) and some will be far greater (and involve rethinking how you approach many familiar situations). Change could be on the way for you, so let’s get started...

Suggested Readings

Kolb, D. (2014). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development* (2nd ed.). Pearson FT Press.

Myers, I. B., & Myers, P. B. (1995). *Gifts differing: Understanding personality type* (2nd ed.). CPP.

<https://www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/mbti-basics/>

Becker, L. (2018). *14 days to exam success (pocket study skills)* (2nd ed.). Red Globe Press.

Becker, L. (2019). *Study your way to your perfect career: How to become a successful student, fast, and then make its count (student success)* (1st ed.). SAGE Publications Ltd.

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Heading 2:

Recognising and Using Your Learning Preferences

Topic 2.1: Your Learning Preferences

A quick internet search of learning styles or learning preference shows how complicated and contentious this area can become. You could find websites where only four learning styles are considered and others that recognise far more learning preferences. You need not worry about this. We are not working together here to write a doctoral thesis on the topic, or to introduce a framework to a classroom: we are simply exploring how learning preferences might help you become a more successful student. As with so many other topics around learning, you might become intrigued and want to pursue it further (and it is a fascinating topic), but for our purposes here I will be exploring with you five learning preferences:

1. Visual learners
2. Aural learners
3. Verbal learners
4. Kinaesthetic learners
5. Logical learners

As has been mentioned already, your learning preference will not fall solely within just one of these categories, but you are likely to feel most comfortable within one of them, probably with a recognisable second contender. Later on in this section we will also explore two other factors that have an overarching effect on how you respond to your preferences: whether you are a solitary or a social learner.

Let’s begin with a quiz to help you decide which of these learning preferences might ring true with you:

[Begin scenario 1: explore your options]

Scenario 1

Before you look at any of the questions, close your eyes and take a few moments to imagine that you are sitting halfway through a lecture that is 50 minutes long and that requires you to focus quite hard because the topic is difficult and/or interesting to you. You have a laptop in front of you, but you also brought a pencil and paper just in case you want to jot down a few notes. You are sitting in a lecture theatre with over 100 other students, so you have limited space. Once you have a good firm image of yourself in this scenario, open your eyes and answer the questions below based on the vision you have just seen in your mind's eye. Try not to overthink it: there is no right or wrong answer, just *your* answer.

Once you have made your choices, look first at the feedback from your first response answer, but then go through the feedback to any other answers that felt somewhat like you, so that you can build up a more rounded view of your preferences. You might find that you have one very strong preference and none of the other options sounded like you at all, or you might have a more diffuse response, with several answers feeling familiar. Either of these is fine: if you know you have a very strong learning preference that seems to exclude other preferences, you will work to set up the perfect study situation for yourself; if you identify with several preferences, you will have more options as to how you approach your learning effectively.

So, picture the scene now and answer these questions:

Where is your pencil?

In my bag because I am recording the lecture.

Aural learners prefer to take information in by listening, so they are more likely to use a recording device to capture the lecture.

Flying across my piece of paper trying to copy down the images on the slides.

Visual learners prefer to learn through images, so listening to a lecture can be quite hard for them, and they might use a mind map rather than notes.

I am twiddling it between my fingers.

Movement, even tiny movements such as using a 'fidget toy' or twiddling a pencil is essential if a **kinaesthetic learner** is to absorb lecture information effectively.

It is behind my ear – I am using my laptop to make flow charts of the lecture content.

If you are a **logical learner**, you are likely to need to categorise information through a logical system such as a flowchart, and you might prefer the clean lines produced on a laptop to do this.

It fell on the floor when I realised I can type faster than I can write.

Verbal learners love to learn through words – they make full notes and will enjoy reading those notes later to internalise the information that was offered in the lecture.

What does your notepad or laptop screen look like?

Organised – I always use the same flowchart software, so I know what to expect.

The structure of a flowchart – or similarly diagrammatic way of displaying information – allows a **logical learner** to assimilate information and make strong, logical connections between lecture points.

There is not much on there, because I am recording the lecture.

Although **aural learners** prefer a lasting record of the lecture in the form of a recording, they might also be making bullet-pointed notes for future reference.

Blank – I am not even sure why I brought it with me.

- ☐ Although some **visual learners** become adept at using software that will allow them to make mind maps or similar pictorial records of what they are hearing, many opt to use a paper and pencil instead.

Full of notes – I can almost take this lecture down verbatim.

- ☐ There is pleasure to be taken from a very full set of notes for a **verbal learner** who will feel secure once all of the words are captured in the right place.

It has some of my notes on it.

- ☐ A **kinaesthetic learner** appreciates movement, and so might make some notes on a laptop, but then turn to paper and pencil to make further notes, perhaps in plan form, but then might move away from note taking altogether for a while.

How does your body feel?

Uncomfortable – these lecture halls have cramped seating and we have been here ages.

- ☐ **Kinaesthetic learners** will often become passionate and excel in a presentation, because they can move around, and that is how they like to engage with the world. Being forced to sit still for a long stretch in a lecture does not make taking information especially easy for them.

I have not really noticed, I am so busy making notes.

- ☐ **Verbal learners** can become immersed in the word of the lecture, almost to the point where they forget where they are. They will sometimes stand up and stretch at the end of the lecture, having just noticed that they feel cramped.

I feel relaxed.

- ☐ It is not the case that **logical learners** will get lost in a lecture, but they are likely to be engrossed in activity: making the specific types of notes that suit the way they like to learn.

I feel a bit cramped leaning forward like this.

- ☐ Active listening can be quite hard work, and **aural learners** often assume one position for some minutes, immersed in listening, with only an occasional move to make a note or two.

Fine – I am enjoying what I am doing.

- ☐ Making mind maps ensures that the **visual learner** is moving a little, listening carefully, and content in how the lecture is being transformed into another form.

Question 4. How is your energy level?

My energy level is not as high as it was at the beginning, but I am fine.

- ☐ **Verbal learners** enjoy learning through words, so a lecture can be good for them, but they also enjoy silence to assimilate material. They like to read in silence, for example. A lecture with very full lecture slides would suit them well.

I feel restless and am getting tired.

- ☐ Lecturers that give students the chance to take a ‘movement break’ during a lecture are friends to **kinaesthetic learners**, who take their learning energy from even a minor amount of movement.

I am working hard, so I know I will be tired by the end of the lecture.

- ☐ Transferring material from spoken to words and lecture slides to a diagrammatic form can be hard work, but it is also satisfying for the **logical learner**.

My energy level is good.

The **aural learner** will be sitting still, enjoying the chance to listen to the lecture, and so will have plenty of energy to spare at this stage.

I will be glad to have a rest after the lecture, but I feel good.

Visual learners often become adept at making beautiful mind maps, but they still take concentration, so these learners enjoy the moment but need to take a break after the lecture.

If you speak to the lecturer after the event to say how valuable you found the lecture, would you say:

I see what you mean.

Visual learners will often choose visual words (such as 'see') to express their experiences.

Whatever you say to the lecturer, you will be sure to choose the right words.

For **verbal learners**, for whom words are so central to their learning, using words effectively is always going to be important.

That made sense to me.

A lecture is useful to a **logical learner** only once it sits in a logical structure. The lecturer may offer this in the slides, or the student might make a diagrammatical set of notes, but only at that point will the lecture really make sense.

I get what you are driving at in that lecture.

Those who have a **kinaesthetic learning preference** tend to use action words to describe their experiences and understanding.

I hear what you were saying on that topic.

Instinctively, **aural learners** might use words related to listening (such as 'hear') to reflect upon their experiences.

[End scenario 1: Explore your options]

I am not suggesting here that you can thoroughly get to know yourself as a learner in just a few questions, but this quiz could have given you enough of a sense of your preferences for you to start to strategise around your future learning, which we will turn to next.

Topic 2.2: Making the Most of Your Learning Preferences

It would be unusual for any student to have just one learning preference; most of us like to work in one or two of the ways described here, but we can function quite happily working in several different ways if the occasion demands it. However, you will want to make best use of your time and effort. If you do recognise yourself as having a marked preference for a learning style, you are in a good position to adapt your learning environment and activities so that you achieve the best results.

The list provides more information on the different learning styles; click on the one that best describes you from the options outlined in the previous [topic](#).
<!--Q1: Production link to topic 2.1 "your learning preferences"-->

Aural learners<!--Q2: Production, link to topic 2.3 "Aural Learners"-->

Kinesthetic learners<!--Q3: Link to topic 2.4 Kinaesthetic learners-->

Visual learners<!--Q4: Link to topic 2.5 visual learners-->

Verbal learners<!--Q5: Link to topic 2.6 verbal learners-->

Logical learners<!--Q6: Link to topic 2.7 logical learners-->

These links will give you an idea of how you like to learn, and the impact that this might have on some of the situations you will face as a student. Although you might be sure of your most preferred way of learning, you would still benefit from reading through each of these lists. Watch the video from a student for her advice on how to make the most of your learning preferences and how to overcome hurdles to become a more efficient learner.

Video 1. Maximising Your Learning Efficiency

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Download transcript

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Topic 2.3: Aural Learners

[Begin scenario 1: Explore your options]

Scenario 1

If your style is **aural**, you will enjoy listening to things being explained to you and you might prefer to say things out loud to hear if they make sense to you. Click through the options to understand what will help you learn and equally which activities you might find challenging, and some suggestions of strategies to help.

In personal tutorials, you will find it reassuring to talk through your issues.

You might need to ask the same query of several people so as to confirm answers. This need not be a problem, but reminding yourself to make a note will help.

You enjoy listening in lectures and find it easy to grasp what is being said.

You can become so engrossed that you forget to make detailed notes. Use your institution's virtual learning environment to find material that supports each lecture as a supplement, or record the lecture.

You love seminars and really enjoy the way they allow you to express yourself.

You sometimes forget to notice that you are monopolising the time and space. Make notes in each seminar – that way, you have to take a small speech break.

You find lab work in groups a pleasure because you can talk through your progress.

If there is nobody in the room to talk through instructions, you might find it tedious. Finding a regular lab partner early on will be helpful in all sorts of ways.

You will be happy to talk through your reading list requirements with a librarian.

You might find a huge reading list daunting. Give yourself a set amount of time, not too long, for an initial assessment.

You find notes software that allows you to capture your spoken thoughts a great help.

You can find the notes that you create that way overwhelming. Make a date every three days to ruthlessly prune what you have.

Presentations offer you an excellent chance to excel in what you do.

You might struggle to stick to the time and the topic. Use prompt cards to tell you when you should be halfway through.

You will find study groups highly energising.

- You will be tempted to spend too long socialising rather than working alone. Ask everyone to make a firm plan of what you will achieve during each session.

[End scenario 1: Explore your options]

As an aural learner, you have the benefit of a vibrant learning world: you might be listening to music as you write an essay, or be inspired by listening to your friends talking of their studies. Your love of learning will be kept alive by what you hear every day.

Topic 2.4 Kinaesthetic Learners

[Begin scenario 1: Explore your options]

Scenario 1

If you are a **kinaesthetic** learner, you like to be active, even in a small way, as you learn. You use movement and your body to reinforce the learning process. Click through the options to understand what will help you learn and equally which activities you might find challenging, and some suggestions of strategies to help.

You will find personal/academic tutorials helpful, as long as they are not too long.

- Group tutorials might feel a little restrictive to you. Try working a small piece of modelling clay or adhesive putty as you listen.

You will benefit most from lectures that incorporate brief pair discussions or breaks.

- You might struggle to listen attentively in lectures that do not allow for any activity. Set up an active learning sheet before the lecture: filling out sections can inspire.

You will find the physical space in seminars, allowing for some movement, helpful.

- You might feel inhibited by those around you. Most kinaesthetic learners have found small, unobtrusive movements that are hardly noticeable but that help them to focus, such as rolling a pencil.

You find lab work in groups a pleasure because you can move around and explain.

- You might be disappointed when you formally present your findings on paper. Plan in detail, so that the writing becomes a less laborious task.

You will probably keep your reading list handy on a mobile device.

- Sitting still for ages looking through a reading list might bore you. Alternate your reading lists tasks between assessing, sifting, viewing, and reading.

Making notes will not worry you, because you can take short breaks and move about.

- The notes you create need to make sense to you, so traditional methods might not work. If anything is unclear, check online for demonstrations and examples.

However nervous you might be, you know that presentations allow you to shine.

- Explaining yourself this way works well, but you might forget to reference the slides. If you include plenty of examples, you are more likely to want to use the slides.

You will find study groups useful, especially as they explore new ideas.

- You might be exhausted at the end of a study group session. Ask people to demonstrate an idea if they can, so that you take it in swiftly.

[End scenario 1: Explore your options]

Your learning world is energetic and made all the better for that. You will enjoy life around campus and moving from place to place to learn. You might be physically tired by the end of each day, but you will be content.

Topic 2.5 Visual Learners

[Begin scenario 1: Explore your options]

Scenario 1

If you have a preference for **visual** learning, images and diagrams help you to understand and absorb information. Information you have heard might not always stick with you, but you can glance at a plan and use it quickly and effectively. Click through the options to understand what things will help you learn and equally which activities you might find challenging, and some suggestions of strategies to help.

In your induction meetings with your personal or academic tutor, you will find the handouts and diagrams helpful.

A chat with your personal/academic tutor or mentor might leave you anxious because it feels so ephemeral. Record each meeting in whatever way works best for you (perhaps a flow chart to show your next steps, or a visual plan of your next essay) and share it with your tutor by email.

You will take copious notes in lectures, often in the form of diagrams or mind maps, happy that you have captured the material ready for later.

You might find yourself overwhelmed with too many notes, because you prefer to keep a visual record in every learning situation. Give yourself time each week to look through your notes and, where you can, reduce them down to manageable visual aids.

Seminars give you the chance to capture extra learning.

If the discussion moves fast, you might worry that you are not recording enough. Mind mapping is a diagrammatic way to capture seminars quickly and without needing to take time-consuming notes.

You will be happy with lab work, especially if you record your progress in a flow chart or similar form.

You will want clear instructions and will find it stressful to be told too briefly what is expected of you. Explore your institution's virtual learning environment for any diagrammatic instructions before your lab session, and give yourself regular quiet time to think through what you are learning.

Reading lists will not faze you, and you are likely to want to make notes on them as you progress through a module.

Occasional references thrown out by lecturers, to reading you might like to do, will probably irritate you. Always have your reading notebook nearby so that you can keep track of casual reading recommendations.

You will find note taking a pleasing way to think through concepts and material, although your notes are unlikely to take the form of text throughout.

You might find yourself getting tired, making so many notes to support your learning. Find other ways to record, such as active learning sheets, mind maps, diagrams, and so forth.

You might find organisational software that allows for visual thinking both useful and fun. Your eagerness to share your information will support your aims in a presentation.

You might find yourself lost in your presentation if you are relying on a script. Presentation slides with images, charts, and diagrams can be used as prompts for you as well as your audience.

Study groups will work well for you as long as you can make a mind map as you go along.

If the group is too vague or chatty, or goes off at a tangent, you might find it less useful. Groups of students with similar learning style preferences often work extremely well: this might be an influential factor if you choose to start up your own study or revision group.

[End scenario 1: Explore your options]

As a visual learner, the world all around you is an exciting opportunity. You will notice posters asking for student reps, you will see a lecture slide and a topic will just click into place. By the end of week, you are likely to have mind maps galore, with everything in its place and accessible to you as a learner.

Topic 2.6 Verbal Learners

[Begin scenario 1: Explore your options]

Scenario 1

Those who gravitate towards **verbal** learning prefer to rely on words; they enjoy learning through reading and talking. Click through the options to understand what things will help you learn and equally which activities you might find challenging, and some suggestions of strategies to help.

Meetings with your personal/academic tutor or mentor could be important to you: the opportunity to talk through your plans and ideas will always be welcome.

You might struggle to keep to time, so that you fail to make the most of each meeting. Write down in advance what you hope to cover, with specific queries, and email this to your tutor or take it with you to the meeting.

Lectures will always keep your attention; you will especially enjoy those lectures in which space is made for brief pair conversations.

You will absorb information so well that you might then struggle to remember that you need to look at other, opposing viewpoints. A study group will help to shake up any rigidity in your ideas.

The discussions that take place in seminars will give you a firm sense of learning in action. You will also be happy to speak up and try out new ideas.

You might find that the seminar becomes a conversation between just you and the seminar leader. This might not be a problem, but you might find that you are missing out on good ideas from other students. Ask a fellow student to let you know if you are dominating the seminar room.

You will see the benefit of lab work, and it will be a powerful learning experience once you have recorded your activities and mulled them over.

You might be inclined to favour scientific accounts of experimental work over the experience of undertaking lab work yourself. This need not impede your progress: lab work will be a scheduled activity within your course and, for optional lab sessions, work with fellow students who are happy to talk through what is happening as you work.

You will see reading lists as a promise of guaranteed new learning.

You might try to read so many of the texts on your lists that you do not leave enough time for other activities. Annotate your reading lists and use a reading notebook to record how well you are working through the reading for your course – and to warn you if your reading schedule is fuller than is sensible in the time you have available.

You will find note taking both affirming of your learning and a good way to think through ideas.

You will make copious notes and you need to control them. Try talking over your notes with a fellow student so that you can both then reduce them to revision style notes.

Being assessed by a presentation could be a gift for you.

You might try to speak with no rehearsal at all, or talk over others in a presentation group: neither action will gain marks. However confident you are in your ability to talk through your ideas, work closely with your group so that you come to feel part of the group effort.

Joining several study groups will appeal to you, as they allow you to talk with like-minded students.

You might not find it easy to keep to the point or keep to task, which would diminish their value to you all. Make an agenda and practise sticking to it: a valuable professional skill as well as useful for your studying progress.

[End scenario 1: Explore your options]

The pleasure in learning for verbal learners comes from the way in which your learning world will open up as you speak and listen. You will take pleasure in conversations about your studying, but also in those passing chats that can lead to strong learning networks.

Topic 2.7 Logical Learners

[Begin scenario 1: Explore your options]

Scenario 1

If your style is logical, you will benefit from seeing patterns and shapes in your learning, and these in turn will reinforce the next stage of your study journey. Click through the options to understand what will help you learn, and equally which activities you might find challenging, and some suggestions of strategies to help.

Meetings with your personal tutor or academic mentor could help you make sense of overarching patterns in your studying.

You would need to make sure that your tutor takes the same sort of approach as you, or can see how you like to do things. Set out clearly how you like to work, perhaps by sending an overview plan for your first meeting.

Lectures will work well for you as long as you are given the chance to see how things fit together.

You might find it frustrating if a lecture is poorly structured or less relevant than you had hoped. Be ready to take notes and spend time considering the lecture after the event, perhaps when you have listened to a few more lectures on the topic area.

Seminars give you the chance to explore patterns and theories, so you will enjoy them if they consolidate your learning into a logical landscape.

Seminars that feel messy or rambling might be stressful for you. Try using a mind map or flowchart to capture the seminar discussion.

Lab work will offer you the chance to put hypotheses into action.

You might be impatient to gain conclusive results too fast. With time and experience you will come to recognise and appreciate the rhythm of lab work within the theories.

You will relish the chance to read your way to a logical conclusion.

You might struggle to work your way through the reading list, overlooking the need to edit the list down to just the texts you need. Carrying out an audit on what you know about an area of study, so that you can identify your knowledge gaps before you tackle a reading list, will help you hugely.

You will find note taking satisfying, as you bring order and precision to your thoughts and knowledge.

Once you see a pattern, you might be tempted too often to move swiftly on to the next area of study. Hindsight will help you here. Every few weeks, take a look through your notes (no more than an overview glance) and see if you can spot any areas where a return to some research would be beneficial to your understanding.

Being assessed by a presentation works well for you as you will have mastered your topic.

You might find group presentations difficult, if your fellow presenters are taking a less logical approach than you would like. If you know of other students in your seminar group or class who like to express themselves in the same way as you do, try to team up with them for group presentations.

Study groups could be right up your street, giving you space and time to think through the patterns and shapes that are emerging in your understanding.

You will need to be able to work with fellow students who approach a topic in a very different way, displaying their learning preference rather than yours. If you can stick with it, this could be an excellent learning experience. You will be shown different ways to approach your material, and this will extend your learning even if you later need to rework some of that material.

[End scenario 1: Explore your options]

Logical learners gain great satisfaction from seeing how systems and processes work, so you will enjoy campus life, with its routine and regular activities. You will also gain energy from seeing how your progress is developing in a strong and logical pattern.

Topic 3.1: Ways to Revise Using Your Learning Preferences

Preparing for exams can be a stressful time, partly because there rarely seems to be enough time to revise as you would like. You make plans, perhaps making a revision schedule and starting out with the best of intentions, and then life gets in the way. Making good use of your learning preferences can really help here, saving you time by ensuring that you make good, firm progress each time you revise. By following these checklists, you can put yourself in a great position as you approach exams.

Revision Ideas for Different Learning Preferences

For the aural preference student:

- Ask family and friends to test you on your notes to help you engage.
- Record yourself on your phone, outlining some salient point, and play it back, to reinforce your recall.
- Attend every revision seminar or lecture you can, so that you can hear the facts and ideas being explained to you again.
- Listen to podcasts that explore your subject area. If you are struggling in an area and can spare the time, see if your university offers lecture capture with a recording of some of your lectures.

For the kinaesthetic preference student:

- Walk around as you repeat back information: the movement will underpin your recall.
- Try using the 'memory palace' revision tool (also called the method of loci): visualise each fact as sitting in your study room or bedroom, then walk around the room as you try to imagine each fact sitting there, so that in the exam you can 'walk' in your imagination.
- In a study group, you could all demonstrate what you mean as you explain to each other the theories or processes that you are trying to master: sometimes this might be a 'physical diagram' that you make together by standing in a particular pattern.
- If you rely on timelines, flowcharts, or other diagrams, make them enormous, so that you physically have to move around to see all the detail.

For the visual preference student:

- Flashcards could be your best friend in revision, and you probably use them already.
- Using a mind map could appeal to you, and learning how to produce a mind map early on will help you with much of your studying.
- Videoclips online will help to deepen your understanding.
- If you feel that your grasp of a topic is slipping, rather than going straight back to your notes, see if there are presentation slides, ideally with images, lodged on your module VLE.

For the verbal preference student:

- If spoken words are your favourite way to learn, you will benefit from revision groups, as long as you enjoy revising alongside others.

- Your notes will already be your most important learning tool, and reworking them down to brief notes, perhaps on revision cards that you can hold in your hand, will offer you the best way to feel confident about your learning and recall.
- Reading through lecture handouts, perhaps highlighting important sections in them and returning to them later in your final revision push, would help you with instant exam recall.

For the logical preference student:

- If you have a revision buddy, make sure it is someone who sees things as logically as you do, so that no time is wasted.
- If you like to make revision notes, putting an overarching statement at the top of each section of notes will reassure you that the pieces of your material fit together.
- Because you are likely to have made overarching diagrams or bullet-pointed lists from previous modules and courses, you might find it useful to contextualise your work now by glancing back at those past notes.
- If you find yourself stuck at any point, ask your tutor or lecturer to spend just a few minutes talking through the shape of a topic area with you, so that you are not held up struggling to see the logical way forward.

These suggestions will only take you so far. Learning, and revision in particular, is to some extent about a habit in your way of working. If you have been using flashcards since you were five, and have never tried using anything else, you might want to experiment with a different method because it relates more to your learning preferences, but flashcards might always be the mainstay of your revision, because that is how you have been trained to recall information.

Variety will help keep your mind alert and engaged throughout your revision, so you will benefit from varying your revision tasks, using several different methods. That is one of the reasons why it is important to recognise that we can all benefit from more than one preference. Even if one technique is your favourite way to learn and recall, some movement from one technique to another, however brief, will help keep you going.

Topic 3.2: Memory Techniques That Suit Your Learning Preference

[Begin scenario 1: explore your options]

Scenario 1

It makes sense to match your memory techniques to your preferred learning style. This will save you time and effort, bringing better results and less stress as you build towards exams or tests by developing your powers of recall. Click on each of the options to learn more.

Mnemonics: a memory technique for aural learners

- This is a quick and simple way for aural learners to recall information, which is why it is widely used – even those who do not have a strong aural preference can find this useful from time to time. Take the first letter of the series of words you want to remember and then, rather than trying to retain all of the information at the front of your mind, just remember the trigger word. You are already using this technique if you like making SMART plans or you know the points of the compass by the mnemonic ‘Never Eat Shredded Wheat’ or something similar.

Whole-body recall: a memory technique for kinaesthetic learners

- You are in the lucky position of being able to adapt to most revision methods, as long as some movement is involved. You might enjoy using flashcards whilst walking around a room, for example, or write notes in different areas of a noticeboard so that you are automatically including the energy of movement in your recall process.

The method of loci: a memory technique for visual learners

- Build yourself a ‘memory palace’. Picture a building (or just a room) that you know well, and imagine the material you are trying to remember as sitting in different places around that room or building. As you try to recall information in an exam, visualise yourself walking around the space and simply picking up the material you need. This takes practice, so persevere to reap the benefits!

Flashcards: a memory technique for verbal learners

- You might have been using flashcards since you were in your first school, and they will still work well for you today if you are a verbal learner. Whereas your early flashcards would have had pictures on one side, today they will have keywords on one side and then a more detailed version of what you are trying to recall on the other. Because you like to use words to express yourself and reinforce your thinking, you are also likely to get others involved, asking them to test you as you recall information out loud.

Big picture recall: a memory technique for logical learners

- Your recall will be particularly strong if the material fits into a pattern that you both recognise and appreciate, so try experimenting with diagrams that you might otherwise use for planning a piece of work. If you have a favourite method of planning, one that allows you to see both the overview of your assignment and the fine detail of what you need to include, the same method will work well as you produce revision sheets for easy recall on your selected topics.

[End scenario 1: explore your options]

Memory techniques all require practice and persistence, but it is worth making the effort now. Try out different methods and refine them over time to suit you and the way you like to work. Developing your recall skills as you study will give you a valuable set of memory tools for the rest of your life.

Topic 3.3: Mock Exams and Your Learning Preferences

Taking a mock exam might be part of your class activity in a course, but it is also something you can do independently, alone, or as part of a group, to give yourself the chance to practise for the exam. In theory, this is fine. If you set it up well, you will gain a sense of how it will feel in the exam room or for the online test, it will give you the chance to see what you can achieve in the time allowed, and it will test how much you know.

[Insert scenario 1: explore your options]

However, if your learning preference does not lend itself to sitting down and running through a practice exam, you might find that giving yourself a traditional mock exam works against you. Adopting a more effective method to test your knowledge and recall would be a far better approach. The approaches suggested here do not all replicate the tension of an exam room, but they might suit your learning preferences well. Click on each learning preference to learn more.

For the visual learner:

- Making plans for the exam might serve you better than writing out whole exam answers. You might want to take a couple of full mock exams, but then move to making detailed plans. That way, you will be able to work through more questions using a method that supports your preference.

For the verbal learner:

- Traditional mock exams would suit you. Sitting down and writing out full answers under exam conditions will not increase your stress and will prepare you for the exam. Just make sure that you leave enough time to complete a full mock exam, or series of mock exams.

For the kinaesthetic learner:

- The exam room is unlikely to be your favourite place to express yourself if you have no chance to move for re-energising. There are two ways to approach this: use a past (or example) paper and think it through as you would normally approach a study task (this might be striding around a room or sitting on a yoga ball). Then, sit down to take a mock exam to see how many aids you can use to help you focus. These might include 'fidget toys', a pencil to twirl, a tennis ball under one foot – any number of aids to small, productive movement.

For the aural learner:

- Make noise happen. This could be having music in the background as you work through the practice exam, speaking the questions aloud as you think about them, even making a recording of your first reactions to the paper, and using this as a basis of your answer. This will not replicate the exam room experience, but it will move you towards a good place in your preparations, and one formal mock exam in absolute quietness will prepare you for the feel of the real exam.

For the logical learner:

- As with any student taking a mock exam, you would benefit from one complete run through of an example or past paper to make sure that you recognise how the exam conditions will feel. Beyond that, you might turn to making detailed plans for each answer rather than writing it out in full. This would give you the advantage of seeing how your answer fits together logically and how the whole shape of the answer will look. If you work to make a detailed plan, you will find that you have almost complete answers by the end of each mock exam, and this should be enough.

[End scenario 1: explore your options]

Practice exams can be contentious. Some students love them and see them as an essential part of their exam preparation. For others, mock exams make them even more nervous. Some students find it reassuring to have achieved a full set of answers to a practice paper whilst others feel it makes their thinking too rigid. Whatever your view, tailoring practice activities to your learning preference should give you the best chance to benefit from mock exams.

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Heading 4:

Overarching Personality Preferences

Topic 4.1: Are You a Solitary or Social Learner?

Recognising your learning style is not the complete picture when it comes to making the most of your time and energy: you also need to take a moment to consider the sort of person you are. This is especially true when it comes to study. You are likely to prefer either working alone or with others. For some students this is a very marked preference, such that it hinders them when they are required to work in a group, for example. For many it is simply a slightly preferential way to work. Whichever is the case for you, it makes sense to factor it into your learning strategy.

You might already suspect that you are more extravert or introvert, but people can be taken by surprise when they take a personality type test and studying is a field that might exacerbate or mitigate your overall preferences. You might want to check out the quiz below to give you an idea of whether you are more likely to be a solitary or social learner.

[Begin scenario 1: explore your options]

Scenario 1

Imagine that you have had a full week of studying and you are reflecting now on how you responded to different learning situations that you encountered:

The study group you recently joined.

I feel frustrated – we seemed to waste so much time just chatting

- For the solitary learner, groups like this can feel unproductive – you will need to choose your groups carefully, with small numbers of like-minded students, or avoid them.

I loved it – we seemed to get plenty done and I feel more confident.

- Social learners will make study groups, both formal and informal, a key part of their learning lives.

I enjoyed it as a social thing, but I wonder if I might have achieved more by myself.

- If you do not have a strong solitary/social preference, you might dip in and out of these groups as the need arises.

The seminars in which you took part

They were sometimes boring, but I did speak up when I had something to say.

- Those without a strong solitary/social preference are likely to respond to some seminars more positively than to others, depending on the topic of the seminar and whether they have friends in the room.

I dread them – I cannot see the point when I could just be getting on with work.

It can be frustrating if you are a solitary learner to find yourself required to attend seminars, especially if they are noisy and discursive.

They were amazing – I look forward to them every week.

Social learners tend to enjoy every seminar, almost regardless of the topic – it is the energy of the event that inspires them.

The lectures you attended

They progress my studying well and I look forward to chatting to people afterwards.

Students without a strong solitary/social preference tend to enjoy lectures more if they can see a clear purpose to them, even if this purpose is to meet with a friend after the event.

I worked hard and I think it will show in my results, but they are not my favourite part of studying.

Social learners can lose energy during a lecture but can pick it up again when they talk to their friends after the event.

I loved them – it is so good to gain an insight into the topic and be able to take my own notes as we go.

Solitary learners are happy to make lectures an important pillar of their learning lives.

Rehearsals for your group presentation.

They drive me mad – talking about every single little detail rather than just producing the slides we needed.

Solitary learners can be particularly good at giving presentations, but they are less keen on group events because they can find the group elements a distraction.

I am so glad we are presenting as a group – it really helps me feel more confident.

Social learners do not necessarily do better than anyone else in a group presentation, but they do enjoy the process of working together in a group.

They seem a nice bunch and we are working through what needs to be done.

For those students with no strong solitary/social presentation, a group presentation is not especially daunting, but they would not mind an individual presentation either.

Meetings with your personal/academic tutor or mentor

I value the chance to talk through what I am doing with an expert.

Having no strong solitary/social preferences tends to mean that you prefer a meeting with your tutor if there is a clear structure, so that you can see why you are there, but you will not be troubled by having to see your tutor regularly.

They are one of the highlights of my study time.

Social learners will tend to use all the time allowed for tutorials and similar meetings and will feel motivated by being able to talk through their studies.

I like my tutor, but the silences make me feel awkward.

A solitary learner is likely to benefit most from a well-structured tutorial in which the aims are clear, as is the contribution the student is expected to make.

[End scenario 1: explore your options]

We can all excel as learners whether we prefer solitary or social study. Achievement is never about being the 'right' sort of person to study well, it is about making sure that you have techniques to hand that aid your personal development to best effect.

Topic 4.2: Opportunities for Solitary Learners

Once you think you might know what type of learner you are, you will naturally want to learn how best to make the most of this preference. This video will help you uncover the benefits of being a solitary learner.

[Video 1](#). Advice for Solitary Learners

[insert video coding here as per encoding guidelines: ID is V1076019]

[transcripts are uploaded in SMART in four formats as file type 'Other']

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Now that you have seen the video, you might like to take some time to think about how you can put your new knowledge about yourself into action. You might like to consider these discussion questions:

1. Are there situations in which I might change from a solitary learner to a more social learner? Why might I do that? What might be the benefits to me of doing it?
2. Can I identify six examples that show when my preference for solitary learning has been beneficial to my learning?
3. What three actions could I take to ensure that my learning life reflects and makes the most of my solitary learning preference?
4. Are there any learning situations in which I face a disadvantage because of my solitary learning preference? How could I minimise this potential disadvantage?
5. Who can I identify as a successful solitary learner? Is this someone who could share tips and ideas for success with me?
6. Looking ahead, do my current career plans fit in well with my identity as a solitary learner?

Topic 4.3: Opportunities for Social Learners

Once you think you might know what type of learner you are, you will naturally want to learn how best to make the most of this preference. This video will help you uncover the benefits of being a social learner.

[Video 1](#). Advice for Social Learners

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[transcripts are uploaded in SMART in four formats as file type 'Other']

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[Download transcript](#)

[insert transcript PDF: V1076020.pdf]

Now that you have seen the video, you might like to get together with friends and supporters to discuss how you can put your new knowledge about yourself into action. You might like to consider these discussion questions:

1. Are there situations in which I might change from a social learner to a more solitary learner? Why might I do that? What might be the benefits to me of doing it?
2. Between us, can we identify six examples that show when my preference for social learning has been beneficial to my learning?
3. What three actions could I take to ensure that my learning life reflects and makes the most of my social learning preference?
4. Are there any learning situations in which I face a disadvantage because of my social learning preference? Can we all think together about how I could minimise this potential disadvantage?
5. Who can I identify as a successful social learner? Is this someone who could share tips and ideas for success with me?
6. Looking ahead, do my current career plans fit in well with my identity as a social learner?

Skill Self-Assessment

- I would like to learn more about my learning preferences. (maps onto 2.1 Your learning preferences)
- I am not sure how my learning preferences can help me in my studies. (maps onto 2.2 Making the most of your learning preferences)
- I enjoy hearing things explained to me. (maps onto 2.3 Aural Learners)
- I find it difficult to keep still in a learning situation. (maps onto 2.4 Kinesthetic Learners)
- I find that diagrams, videos, and pictures help me learn. (maps onto 2.5 Visual Learners)
- Reading and making notes, than talking through the material, works well for me as I learn. (maps onto 2.6 Verbal Learners)
- I need to see the bigger picture in my learning. (maps onto 2.7 Logical Learners)
- I want to make the most of my time when I am revising. (maps onto 3.1)
- I have not yet found a memory technique that works well for me. (maps onto 3.2)
- I want to know how to use mock/practice exams well. (maps onto 3.3)
- I am not sure if I have solitary or a social learner preference. (maps onto 4.1)
- I want to use my opportunities as a solitary learner. (maps onto 4.2)
- I want to use my opportunities as a social learner. (maps onto 4.3)