

Multiple Intelligences



Howard Gardner of Harvard has identified seven distinct intelligences. This theory has emerged from recent cognitive research and "documents the extent to which students possess different kinds of minds and therefore learn, remember, perform, and understand in different ways," according to Gardner (1991). According to this theory, "we are all able to know the world through language, logical-mathematical analysis, spatial representation, musical thinking, the use of the body to solve problems or to make things, an understanding of other individuals, and an understanding of ourselves. Where individuals differ is in the strength of these intelligences - the so-called profile of intelligences -and in the ways in which such intelligences are invoked and combined to carry out different tasks, solve diverse problems, and progress in various domains."

Gardner says that these differences "challenge an educational system that assumes that everyone can learn the same materials in the same way and that a uniform, universal measure suffices to test student learning. Indeed, as currently constituted, our educational system is heavily biased toward linguistic modes of instruction and assessment and, to a somewhat lesser degree, toward logical-quantitative modes as well." Gardner argues that "a contrasting set of assumptions is more likely to be educationally effective. Students learn in ways that are identifiably distinctive. The broad spectrum of students - and perhaps the society as a whole - would be better served if disciplines could be presented in a numbers of ways and learning could be assessed through a variety of means." The learning styles are as follows:

Visual-Spatial - think in terms of physical space, as do architects and sailors. Very aware of their environments. They like to draw, do jigsaw puzzles, read maps, daydream. They can be taught through drawings, verbal and physical imagery. Tools include models, graphics, charts, photographs, drawings, 3-D modeling, video, videoconferencing, television, multimedia, texts with pictures/charts/graphs.

Bodily-kinesthetic - use the body effectively, like a dancer or a surgeon. Keen sense of body awareness. They like movement, making things, touching. They communicate well through body language and be taught through physical activity, hands-on learning, acting out, role playing. Tools include equipment and real objects.

Musical - show sensitivity to rhythm and sound. They love music, but they are also sensitive to sounds in their environments. They may study better with music in the background. They can be taught by turning lessons into lyrics, speaking rhythmically, tapping out time. Tools include musical instruments, music, radio, stereo, CD-ROM, multimedia.

Interpersonal - understanding, interacting with others. These students learn through interaction. They have many friends, empathy for others, street smarts. They can be taught through group activities, seminars, dialogues. Tools include the telephone, audio conferencing, time and attention from the instructor, video conferencing, writing, computer conferencing, E-mail.

Intrapersonal - understanding one's own interests, goals. These learners tend to shy away from others. They're in tune with their inner feelings; they have wisdom, intuition and motivation, as well as a strong will, confidence and opinions. They can be taught through independent study and introspection. Tools include books, creative materials, diaries, privacy and time. They are the most independent of the learners.

Linguistic - using words effectively. These learners have highly developed auditory skills and often think in words. They like reading, playing word games, making up poetry or stories. They can be taught by encouraging them to say and see words, read books together. Tools include computers, games, multimedia, books, tape recorders, and lecture.

Logical -Mathematical - reasoning, calculating. Think conceptually, abstractly and are able to see and explore patterns and relationships. They like to experiment, solve puzzles, ask cosmic questions. They can be taught through logic games, investigations, mysteries. They need to learn and form concepts before they can deal with details.

At first, it may seem impossible to teach to all learning styles. However, as we move into using a mix of media or multimedia, it becomes easier. As we understand learning styles, it becomes apparent why multimedia appeals to learners and why a mix of media is more effective. It satisfies the many types of learning preferences that one person may embody or that a class embodies. A review of the literature shows that a variety of decisions must be made when choosing media that is appropriate to learning style.

Visuals: Visual media help students acquire concrete concepts, such as object identification, spatial relationship, or motor skills where words alone are inefficient.

Printed words: There is disagreement about audio's superiority to print for affective objectives; several models do not recommend verbal sound if it is not part of the task to be learned.

Sound: A distinction is drawn between verbal sound and non-verbal sound such as music. Sound media are necessary to present a stimulus for recall or sound recognition. Audio narration is recommended for poor readers.

Motion: Models force decisions among still, limited movement, and full movement visuals. Motion is used to depict human performance so that learners can copy the movement. Several models assert that

motion may be unnecessary and provides decision aid questions based upon objectives. Visual media which portray motion are best to show psychomotor or cognitive domain expectations by showing the skill as a model against which students can measure their performance.

Color: Decisions on color display are required if an object's color is relevant to what is being learned.

Realia: Realia are tangible, real objects which are not models and are useful to teach motor and cognitive skills involving unfamiliar objects. Realia are appropriate for use with individuals or groups and may be situation based. Realia may be used to present information realistically but it may be equally important that the presentation corresponds with the way learner's represent information internally.

Instructional Setting: Design should cover whether the materials are to be used in a home or instructional setting and consider the size what is to be learned. Print instruction should be delivered in an individualized mode which allows the learner to set the learning pace. The ability to provide corrective feedback for individual learners is important but any medium can provide corrective feedback by stating the correct answer to allow comparison of the two answers.

Learner Characteristics: Most models consider learner characteristics as media may be differentially effective for different learners. Although research has had limited success in identifying the media most suitable for types of learners several models are based on this method.

Reading ability: Pictures facilitate learning for poor readers who benefit more from speaking than from writing because they understand spoken words; self-directed good readers can control the pace; and print allows easier review.

Categories of Learning Outcomes: Categories ranged from three to eleven and most include some or all of Gagne's (1977) learning categories; intellectual skills, verbal information, motor skills, attitudes, and cognitive strategies. Several models suggest a procedure which categorizes learning outcomes, plans instructional events to teach objectives, identifies the type of stimuli to present events, and media capable of presenting the stimuli.

Events of Instruction: The external events which support internal learning processes are called events of instruction. The events of instruction are planned before selecting the media to present it.

Performance: Many models discuss eliciting performance where the student practices the task which sets the stage for reinforcement. Several models indicate that the elicited performance should be categorized by type; overt, covert, motor, verbal, constructed, and select. Media should be selected which is best able to elicit these responses and the response frequency. One model advocates a

behavioral approach so that media is chosen to elicit responses for practice. To provide feedback about the student's response, an interactive medium might be chosen, but any medium can provide feedback. Learner characteristics such as error proneness and anxiety should influence media selection.

Testing which traditionally is accomplished through print, may be handled by electronic media. Media are better able to assess learners' visual skills than are print media and can be used to assess learner performance in realistic situations.

from "The Distance Learning Technology Resource Guide," by Carla Lane

