



# Tips for Parents: Learning Styles

## What is a “learning style?”

We used to think that everyone studied best in the same way—sitting alone quietly at a desk in a well-lit room. Recently, researchers have found that this “style” of acquiring new knowledge doesn’t work for everyone. Some people will remember a paragraph better if they read it while lying on the sofa rather than sitting at a desk. Some people will remember it better if they’re listening to music. The individual way in which each of us learns best is our personal learning style.

## Why is learning style important?

Learning style is more than a question of being physically comfortable while studying. A child who doesn’t study according to his or her learning style will have trouble learning and retaining new information. This mismatch not only affects your child’s performance, but also his or her attitude toward learning. In other words, learning style relates to your child’s motivation.

It’s important to remember that children can learn almost any subject matter if it’s taught in a matter consistent with their learning style. By the same token, when learning style is ignored, your child’s chances of failing increase substantially. By supporting your child’s learning style, you help make learning easier and more enjoyable—a rewarding, lifelong pursuit for your child.

## What is my child’s learning style?

**Notice the way your children study.** Do they like to study in front of the television or with music? Do they close the door to their rooms and disappear for an hour or two? If it works, don’t try to change your child’s routine. It may seem hard to believe that your child is actually learning, but remember, you may have a very different learning style.

**Learning styles can change.** In fact, most children start out with a more global learning style and become more analytic as they get older. But this doesn’t mean that your child will eventually end up at a desk.

## What happens when my child goes to school?

This is an important question, because your child’s learning style doesn’t change just because he or she leaves home. It is essential that your child’s classroom teacher take different learning styles into account in order to meet each child’s needs.

One way to determine whether your child’s teacher supports different learning styles is to notice how the classroom is set up. It should at least recognize the difference between global and

analytic learners, for example, by offering different seating arrangements. One area may have traditional desks, another may have rugs, pillows, or beanbag chairs.

There should be an area where lighting is *not* florescent. Depending on the child, florescent lighting has positive or negative effects, as does natural lighting. There should be areas in the classroom where lighting sources are different.

There should be opportunities for children who need to take breaks to do so, but there should be quiet areas for children who tend to be disrupted by noise and distractions.

The key is whether the classroom offers a variety of environments. Such a classroom will be divided into different areas so that children with one learning style can study in one area without interfering with children in another area where a different learning style is being supported.

### **Be an advocate**

Not all educators promote different learning styles in the classroom. You may find it necessary to talk with your child's teachers about learning styles and the fact that you favor a classroom where different learning styles are encouraged.

For more information:

### **Books:**

Willis, Mariaemma; Kindle Hodson, Victoria. "Discover Your Child's Learning Style: Children Learn in Unique Ways - Here's the Key to Every Child's Learning Success." Prima Lifestyles, 1999.

Fuller, Cheri. "Talkers, Watchers, and Doers: Unlocking Your Child's Unique Learning Style." Pinon Press, 2004

### **Web article:**

<http://www.usd.edu/trio/tut/ts/style.html>

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