

Teaching Styles vs. Your Learning Style

Have you ever felt like your instructor gave lectures in stereo but you only had one speaker? Or that the instructor seemed to be broadcasting in FM while you only had an AM radio? It does not mean that they are a poor instructor or that you are a bad student. It often means that your learning style and your instructor's teaching style aren't matching up well. If you are a strong visual learner who prefers illustrations, outlines of lectures, and things written on the board, it is difficult to absorb information from a straight lecture. Or maybe you prefer a left-brained approach (detailed, linear, and straightforward), while your instructor uses a distinctly right-brain format (discussion, visuals, intuitive) like in the table below.

Left-Brain	Right-Brain
<i>Tends to be:</i> Formal, traditional, lectures, calls on students to answer questions	<i>Tends to be:</i> Holistic, informal, intuitive
<i>Makes use of:</i> Definitions, diagrams, lists, outlines, detail summaries, facts, specifics	<i>Makes use of:</i> Groups, discussion, visuals, volunteers to answer questions, compare and contrast, evaluation, relating concepts, ideas, theories

If your instructor's teaching style matches your learning style, it becomes much easier to pay attention and to absorb information. However, if it doesn't match up, your responsibilities increase. Your instructor can't possibly teach in a way that suits the needs of every student in every class. The responsibility for accommodating differences in teaching and learning styles falls on you. Here are some suggestions to cope with some of those differences.

IF YOUR INSTRUCTOR FAILS TO...	THEN YOU...
Explain goals of the lecture	Use your text and syllabus to set objectives
Review previous lecture material	Set aside time before class to review your notes
State main ideas in the introduction and summary of lecture	Write short summaries of the day's lecture immediately after class
Provide an outline of the lecture	Preview assigned readings before class or outline notes after class
Provide enough time for writing notes	Politely ask the instructor to repeat information or slow down; ask if you can use a tape recorder
Speak clearly and at appropriate volume	Politely ask the instructor to repeat information or speak more loudly; sit in the front of class
Answer questions without sarcasm	Refrain from taking comments personally
Stay on topic	Discover how the story relates to the topic or use the story as a memory link
Emphasize main point	Supplement lectures with text previews and reading; meet with instructor after class
Give examples to illustrate ideas	Ask instructor for clarifying examples, discuss with other students, create own examples
Write important words, dates, etc. on board	Supplement notes with details listed in text
Define important terms	Use text glossary or a dictionary
Use audiovisual aids to reinforce ideas	Relate information to what you know about the topic or create own clarifying examples