

The Value of Experiential Learning

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People retain more of what they learn by being actively involved in the learning process. While we may predominately favor one style of learning over another, we undoubtedly learn by the coordinated use of all senses – *seeing, hearing, and doing*.

Not all students learn the same way, and educators can achieve greater success if they understand this and accommodate different learning styles. Some students learn best by verbal instruction, others prefer to watch a demonstration, and others prefer to jump right in and figure it out. The style in which we learn and remember the most is often the same style we are most comfortable teaching. The more styles you utilize in your teaching, the more of your audience you will reach. It is important to remember that we all learn using a combination of styles. Each of us has learning preferences, and we may be more comfortable with some styles than others due to the nature of our own unique backgrounds.

Table: Retention, Teaching, and Learning Styles

Percent Retained	Method	Learning Style
10%	Reading	Verbal (Passive)
20%	Hearing Words	Verbal (Passive)
30%	Looking at Pictures	Verbal (Passive)
50%	Watching a Movie	Visual (Passive)
50%	Watching a Demonstration	Visual (Passive)
70%	Participating in Discussion	Participating (Active)
70%	Giving a Talk	Participating (Active)
90%	Doing a Dramatic Presentation	Participating (Active)
90%	Simulating a Real Experience	Participating (Active)
90%	Doing the Real Thing	Participating (Active)

Table: Dale, Edger, “Dales Cone of Learning/Experience,” in *Wilderness Training Module* (1993), Jacobson and Orlich, adapted from *Leave No Trace Training Guide*. Modified by Susan Bender, Ph.D., Director, Office of International Students & Scholars, University of Nevada, Reno, 10/2004.