

# Learning Styles

## October 2021

Why do we care?

This is part of a larger subject — how to teach square dancing

We are all different

We have different preferred ways of learning

For today we are going to focus on 3

1. Visual (learn by seeing)
2. Auditory (learn by hearing)
3. Kinesthetic (learn by doing)

Which are you?

You may discover that you have a primary learning style and a secondary one as well

More detail from Dottie Welch

## VISUAL LEARNERS (65% of the population):

- -- primarily gather information by sight
- -- tend to say "I see ... [what you are doing]"
- -- take detailed notes
- -- learn well from diagrams, pictures and written information
- -- like to read for themselves rather than be read to

## AUDITORY LEARNERS (30% of the population):

- -- primarily gather information by hearing
- -- tend to say "I hear ...[how to do it]"
- -- listen first, take notes after if at all, or rely on printed notes
- -- learn well from the spoken word
- -- tend to look up or down or close their eyes when trying to absorb information because they are shutting out the visual environment

## KINESTHETIC / TACTILE LEARNERS (5% of the population):

- -- primarily gather information through touch and movement
- -- tend to say "I feel ... [how this goes]"
- -- tend to watch the teacher very closely
- -- need a self-determined learning environment (usually involving action)
- -- exceptionally good at learning skills by imitation and practice
- -- need physical information so want to know how it feels to do something
- -- since each different formation and position feels different, these dancers must experience a move in many contexts so learning takes much longer

Not only are you a learner, you are the teacher

You tend to teach using your primary learning style

This leaves some of your learners at a loss

Idea: We should be able to teach each of our calls in ways that appeal to all learning styles

## Examples

Reading to my wife

Learning line dancing

Cloverleaf

Walk & Dodge

Circulate

Relay The Deucey

## Discussion

We normally teach by talking over the mike

Berate dancers

Man-handle dancers

Dancers teaching dancers

Good learning environment

Big But

No evidence that teaching to learning styles causes better learning

Learning styles is a huge myth in education that developed in the 1960's, was debunked around 2008, and still persists today

This is good news

We no longer have to try and come up with 3 ways to teach each call for each of the learning styles

We no longer have to worry that we are teaching well only people who match our style

We can and should be spending that time we just got back on good teaching

## Evidence-based teaching techniques

I looked at these and, while they exist, they seems more oriented towards a classroom of kids teaching traditional subjects than a room full of adults learning to square dance

<https://newsroom.unl.edu/announce/csmce/5272/29630>

Let's see how one list of "Top 10" evidence-based teaching techniques apply to our activity

## Evidence-Based Teaching Strategy 1: Clear Lesson Goals

It is crucial that you are clear about what you want your students to learn during each lesson. The effect that such clarity has on student results is 32% greater than the effect of holding high expectations for every student (and holding high expectations has a sizeable effect). If you cannot quickly and easily state what you want your students to know and be able to do at the end of a given lesson, the goal of your lesson will be unclear. Clear lesson goals help you (and your students) to focus every other aspect of your lesson on what matters most.

## Evidence-Based Teaching Strategy 2: Show & Tell

We do this some in square dancing with the “demo” where a group of dancers does the call and everyone watches. Make sure they know how to watch.

### Taminations

Don Beck: Make sure that all dancers do the new call correctly the first time

## Evidence-Based Teaching Strategy 3: Questioning to Check for Understanding

While we don't have our dancers take a quiz or test, every time we put the music on and have them dance, we are giving them a real-time quiz.

Are we observing the results of that quiz and altering our teaching based on those results?

Don Beck: Don't quiz them the next week on the calls they just learned — instead, reteach them

## Evidence-Based Teaching Strategy 5: Plenty of Practice

As saying says, practice makes perfect. Practice helps students to retain the knowledge and skills that they have learned while also allowing you another opportunity to check for understanding. If you want to harness the potent power of practice, you must ensure that your students are practicing the right things. Your students should be practicing what they learned during your show and tell, which in turn should reflect your lesson goal. ... Finally, research shows that students do better when their teacher has them practice the same things over a spaced-out period of time.

## Evidence-Based Teaching Strategy 6: Provide Your Students With Feedback

Feedback is the breakfast of champions, and it is the breakfast served by extraordinary teachers around the world. Put simply, giving feedback involves letting your students know how they have performed on a particular task along with ways that they can improve. Unlike praise, which focuses on the student rather than the task, feedback provides your students with a tangible understanding of what they did well, of where they are at, and of how they can improve. In John Hattie's view, any teachers who seriously want to boost their children's results should start by giving them dollops and dollops of feedback.

Can we do this is square dancing?

## Evidence-Based Teaching Strategy 7: Be Flexible About How Long It Takes to Learn

The idea that given enough time, every student can learn is not as revolutionary as it sounds. It underpins the way we teach martial arts, swimming and dancing. It is also the central premise behind mastery learning, a technique that has the same effect on student results as socio-economic status and other aspects of home life. When you adopt mastery learning, you differentiate in a different way. You keep your learning goals the same, but vary the time you give each child to succeed. Within the constraints of a crowded curriculum, this may be easier said than done; however, we can all do it to some degree.

## Summary

We want good teaching

We don't have to worry about learning styles and teaching for all styles

We do have to have more than one way of teaching and explaining a call in case people don't "get" our first way

Many ideas and good references here:

<https://fortytwo.ws/~cbaker/learning-styles.html>