

# Leveraging Your Learning Style

by Sophia



## WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn how to leverage your learning style and personality for maximum effectiveness as a student. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

## 1. Leveraging Your Learning Style

Once you recognize your learning style, you can begin to think about how to make it work for you. By taking advantage of your learning style, you can improve your overall productivity in the classroom and better adapt to academic situations that initially seem challenging or uncomfortable.

It is possible that the way you've been taking notes, studying, or reading and writing is not the way that best suits you, even if it was the way you were taught to do it and have always done it that way. It is also possible that understanding your learning style will lead you to understand why you've performed better in certain types of classes or with certain types of instructors.

You simply need to spend a little bit of time reflecting on your learning style before you can start using it to your advantage.

### IN CONTEXT

You have a biology exam coming up and you weren't satisfied with the score you got on the previous exam, so you are thinking about ways to alter your approach to studying. You have a friend in the class in the same situation, so the two of you decide to start by reflecting on your learning styles.

Your friend follows everything pretty well in class, but she got lost in the textbook and in her notes when studying. She deduces that she is an auditory learner.

You have trouble focusing on the information during class because you want to be up and moving around instead of sitting still. You conclude you are a kinesthetic learner.

So now what? Your friend talks about joining a study group with classmates so she can study by talking and listening (the way she learns best). You decide to try a studying activity like making flashcards and even take them to the gym with you to combine studying and physical activity.

## 2. Your Personality

Your personality is another factor that impacts the way you learn. Classrooms, both real and virtual, are inherently social settings that involve various interactions with other people, and those people will inevitably have an assortment of personality types.

One common way that students' personality types impact classroom dynamics, in both in-person and online classes, is that certain students tend to "speak up" more, contributing more openly in class discussions or forums.

Other students, regardless of their engagement with or comprehension of the course material, are more reserved in their participation.

Because participation is often a required and graded element of a class, reserved students can be at a disadvantage, but understanding your personality and how it affects your performance in school is the first step toward improving.

---

## 3. Introverts and Extroverts

The terms introvert and extrovert are used to describe an individual's personality type with regard to social situations. Introvert means "inward turning" and extrovert means "outward turning."

While introversion and extroversion are often construed as meaning "shy" and "outgoing," this is not exactly the case. Strictly speaking, an introvert thrives on their own and can feel their energy drained by crowds, whereas an extrovert feeds off of the energy of other people.

It's also important to note that no one is entirely introverted or extroverted—it is a spectrum; individuals can lean a little or a lot in one direction or the other or fall somewhere near the middle. Determining where you fall on that spectrum can contribute to a better understanding of your particular learning style and help you customize your higher education experience to fit your personality.

---

## 4. Situations that Challenge Your Personality

Students who tend to be more introverted might dread classes that require lots of student participation in class discussions or involve group projects or presentations. The course material or the workload might not intimidate them, but instead, they are anxious about the social situations and interactions the class demands.

While extroverted students will tend to be more comfortable with speaking up in class and working together with their peers, there are some classroom situations that don't favor extroversion. For instance, if an instructor prefers to lecture for the entire class with little to no input from or interaction with students, extroverts do not have the chance to showcase their skill set or to talk through their ideas to achieve a fuller understanding.

No matter what personality traits you have—or whether you are an introvert or an extrovert—you can expect that certain instructors and certain classroom situations will suit your learning style and preferences and some will not. But if you know your learning style, you can make more informed choices about the classes you take and better adapt to challenging situations that arise in those classes.

➞ **EXAMPLE** You love your journalism class—the instructor is great, the reading is great, and, most of all, the discussion is great. The only problem is you're not participating in it. You have a very introverted and reserved personality. You listen to class discussions with rapt attention and you learn a lot from what your peers have to say, but you know that even if you can muster the courage to say something, it won't be with the same confidence and energy that your classmates display on a regular basis. It's just not who you are. So what can you do?

First of all, you can do your best—try not to let personality differences discourage you or make you resentful. But also, you can write to your instructor or talk to them in person and articulate the reason why you don't participate in discussions very much despite your enthusiasm for the class. It is likely that your instructor has noticed that you seem attentive and engaged even in silence, and they may be open to discussing other ways you can participate that don't entail speaking in front of a roomful of people.

---

## 5. The Validity of Different Approaches to Learning

Recall the discussion about how the diversity of ideas and student perspectives enriches a higher education experience—the same is true of the diversity of instruction and learning styles.

The education experts who have highlighted the importance of recognizing different learning styles also believe that none of the different styles are superior or inferior to the others. Rather, in an ideal experience in higher education, a student encounters and considers a variety of approaches to learning.

While you strive to identify your own strengths and weaknesses and learning style, recognize that the other students around you have similar goals but pursue their own unique paths to reach them.



### SUMMARY

Once you have recognized your preferred learning style, you can select tactics for studying that **leverage your style**. Similarly, if you understand **your personality** style, you can determine ways to leverage it (or manage it) for learning. You may find that you are either **an introvert or an extrovert**. You will encounter diverse learning styles and personalities in higher education in **situations that challenge your personality**. Keep an open mind to **other approaches to learning**.