Kolb's Learning Style

A Short Course in Experiential Learning

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Experiential Learning

- "Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.
  Knowledge results from the combination of grasping experience and transforming it."
  - David Kolb (1984)

Learner's Preferences

- PERCEIVING information
  - (taking info in)
  - Feeling --- Thinking

- PROCESSING information
  - (making sense of info)
  - Doing --- Watching

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4 Learning Styles (Modes)

- Reflecting   "WHY?"
- Philosophy   "WHAT?"
- Analyzing   "HOW?"
- Organizing   "WHAT IF?"

Four-stage Learning Cycle

- Concrete Experience (CE)
- Reflective Observation (RO)
- Abstract Conceptualization (AC)
- Active Experimentation (AE)

Kolb's Learning Model
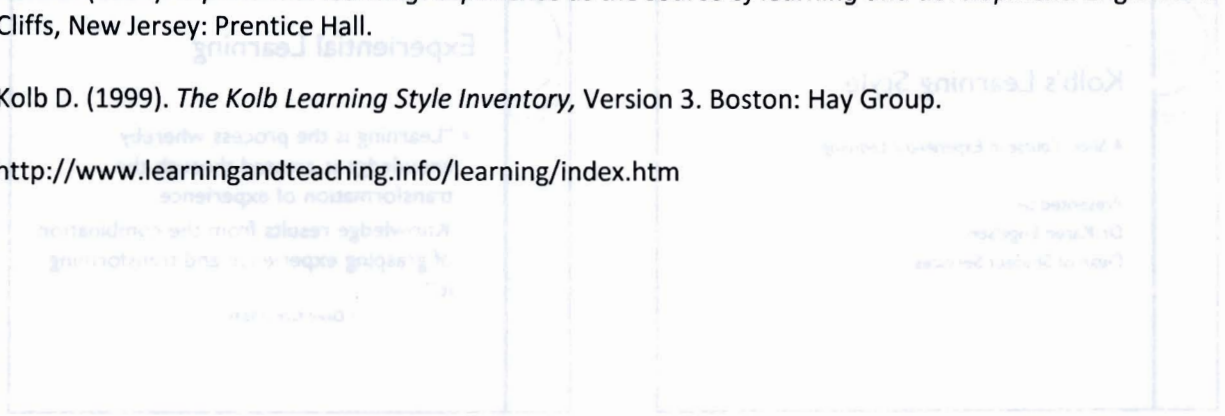
- Understanding of individual learning style

- Cycle of learning that applies to all learners

Bibliography

Kolb D. (1984). *Experiential learning: experience as the source of learning and development.* Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Kolb D. (1999). *The Kolb Learning Style Inventory,* Version 3. Boston: Hay Group.

http://www.learningandteaching.info/learning/index.htm

This survey is designed to help you gain an understanding of your preferred learning style. It is not meant to show you your best way of learning. Rather, it is a tool to better understand learning-to-learn (metalearning) in order to increase self-awareness about your strengths and weakness as a learner so that you will try different methods for learning a task or subject, rather than sticking with a preferred method.

Note that this is not a scientifically validated survey, but it should help you gain some understanding of your preferred learning style based on two continuums:

- Processing Continuum: Our approach to a task - learn by doing or watching.
- Perception Continuum: Our emotional response - learn by thinking or feeling.

Instructions

Read each statement carefully. To the left of each statement, write the code that best describes how each statement applies to you.

Answer honestly as there are no correct or incorrect answers. It is best if you do not think about each question too long. Rather, indicate what comes to you first.

SECTION 1

Write either **"Doing"** or **"Watching"** next to the statement below depending on the part of the statement you most closely relate to.

1. _____ **Doing** – I often produce off-the-cuff ideas that at first might seem silly or half-baked.
   Watching – I am thorough and methodical.
2. _____ **Doing** – I am normally the one who initiates conversations.
   Watching – I enjoy watching people.
3. _____ **Doing** – I am flexible and open minded.
   Watching – I am careful and cautious.
4. _____ **Doing** – I like to try new and different things without too much preparation.
   Watching – I investigate a new topic or process in depth before trying it.
5. _____ **Doing** – I am happy to have to try new things.
   Watching – I draw up lists of possible courses of actions when starting a new project.

6. _____ **Doing** – I like to get involved and to participate.
   Watching – I like to read and observe.
7. _____ **Doing** – I am loud and outgoing.
   Watching – I am quiet and somewhat shy.
8. _____ **Doing** – I make quick and bold decisions.
   Watching – I make cautious and logical decisions.
9. _____ **Doing** – I speak fast, while thinking.
   Watching – I speak slowly, after thinking.

Total numbers of **Doings** - _____ Total number of **Watching** - _____

The one that has the large number is your task preference.

SECTION 2

Write either "**Thinking**" or "**Feeling**" next to the statement below, depending upon the part of the statement you most closely relate to.

1. _____ **Thinking** – I ask probing questions when learning a new subject.
   Feeling – I am good at picking up hints and techniques from other people.
2. _____ **Thinking** – I am rational and logical.
   Feeling – I am practical and down to earth.
3. _____ **Thinking** – I plan events down to the last detail.
   Feeling – I like realistic, but flexible plans.
4. _____ **Thinking** – I like to know the right answers before trying something new.
   Feeling – I try things out by practicing to see if they work.
5. _____ **Thinking** – I analyze reports to find the basic assumptions and inconsistencies.
   Feeling – I rely upon others to give me basic gist of reports.
6. _____ **Thinking** – I prefer working alone.
   Feeling – I enjoy working with others.
7. _____ **Thinking** – Others would describe me as serious, reserved and formal.
   Feeling – Others would describe me as verbal, expressive, and informal.
8. _____ **Thinking** – I use facts to make decisions.
   Feeling – I use feelings to make decisions.
9. _____ **Thinking** – I am difficult to get to know.
   Feeling – I am easy to get to know.

Total numbers of **Thinkings** - _____. Total number of **Feelings** - _____.

The one that has the larger number is your <u>thought or emotional</u> preference.

SCORING PROCEDURES

Each preference (high score) from the two above sections are used to determine your preferred learning style:

If you prefer **Watching** and **Feeling** then this puts you in the **reflecting** category:

- Prefers to learn from activities that allows watching, thinking, and to review what has happened, such as brainstorming and cooperative groups.
- Lectures may be helpful but only if they provide expert explanations and analysis.
- Likes innovative and imaginative approaches to doing things.
- Prefers to view situation from many perspectives.
- Interested in people and tends to be feeling-oriented.

If you prefer Watching and Thinking then you are in the **philosophy** category:

- Prefers to pull a number of different observations and thoughts into an integrated whole in a step – by – step manner (go from details to big – picture)
- Prefers to reason to logically and design models, theories, and projects.
- Likes lectures, analogies, systems, and case studies.
- Talking with experts is normally not helpful.

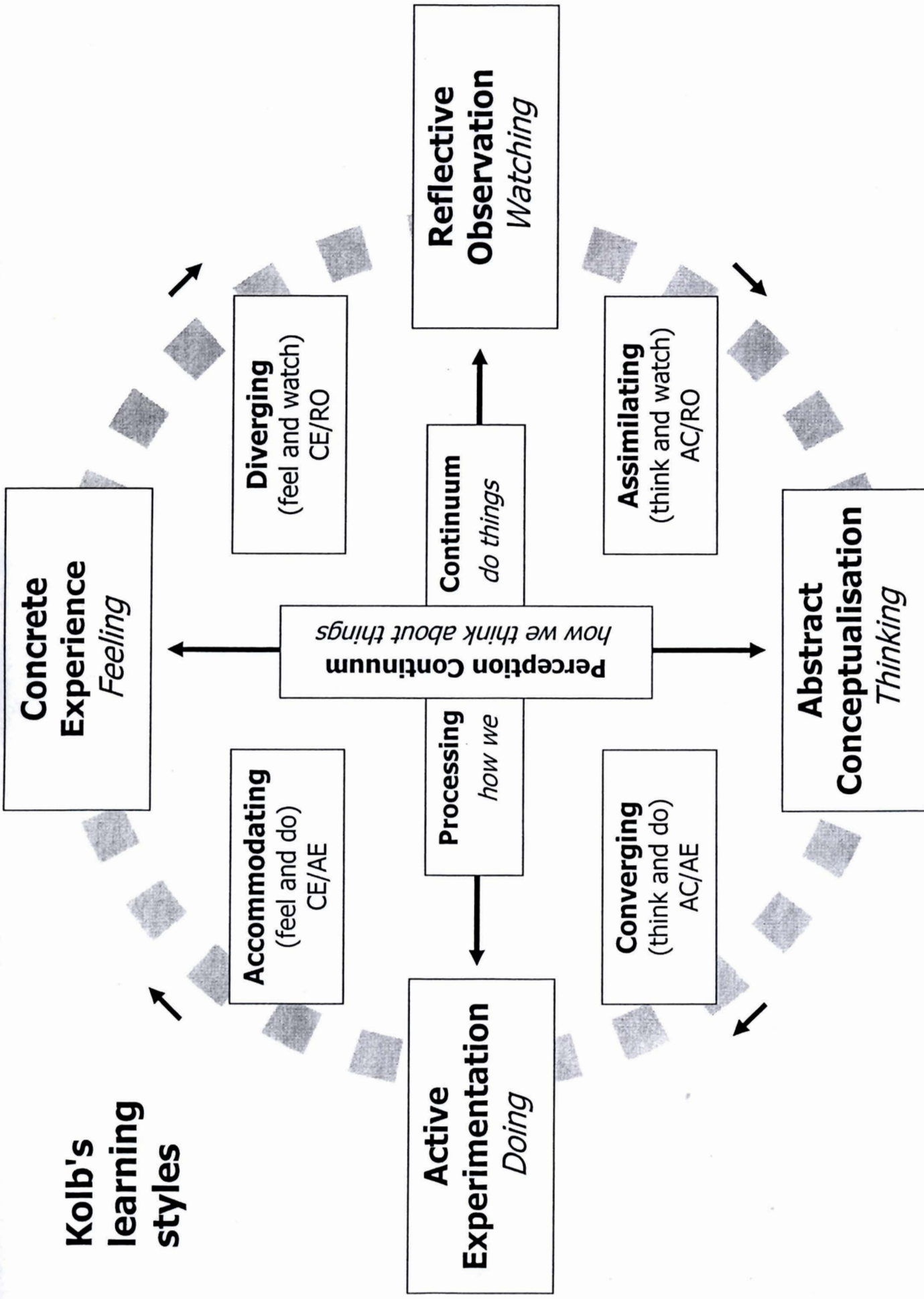If you prefer Doing and Thinking then you are in the **analyzing** category:

- Prefers the practical application of ideas, solving problems, feedback, and decision-making (obvious links between the task – on – hand and a problem)
- Prefers technical problems over interpersonal issues.
- Prefers to apply new learning to actual practice to see if they work.
- Likes laboratories, field work, observations, and coaching.

If you prefer Doing and Felling then you are in the **organizing** category:

- Good at adapting to changing circumstances and solves problems in an intuitive, trial-and-error manner, such as discovery learning.
- Tends to be ease with people.
- Prefers the challenges of new experiences, involvement with others, assimilations, and role-playing.
- Likes anything new, problem solving, and small group discussions.

You will learn best by using ALL four styles, rather than only your preferred learning style. That is, you should incorporate the styles so that you use the <u>Learning Cycle.</u>

Kolb's learning styles

Concrete Experience *Feeling*

Reflective Observation *Watching*

Abstract Conceptualisation *Thinking*

Active Experimentation *Doing*

Diverging (feel and watch) CE/RO

Assimilating (think and watch) AC/RO

Accommodating (feel and do) CE/AE

Converging (think and do) AC/AE

Processing Continuum *how we do things*

Perception Continuum *how we think about things*

Kolb's Learning Styles

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Mode 4 – What if?
Accommodating (Organizing)

Learners combine the learning processes of concrete experience (CE) and active experimentation (AE). They have the ability to learn primarily from hands-on experiences.

Strengths: Getting things done, leadership, risk taking

If too much: Trivial improvements, meaningless activity

Areas needing focus: Work not completed on time, impractical plans, energies not directed toward goals

To develop Mode 4 learning skills, practice:
- Committing yourself to objectives
- Seeking new opportunities
- Influencing and leading others
- Being personally involved
- Dealing with people

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Mode I – Why?
Diverging (Reflecting)

Learners combine the learning processes of concrete experience (CE) and reflective observation (RO). They are best at viewing concrete situations from many different points of view.

Strengths: Imaginative ability, understanding people, recognizing problems, brainstorming

If too much: Paralyzed by choices, can't make decisions

Areas needing focus: Can't recognize problems

To develop Mode 1 learning skills, practice:
- Being sensitive to people's feelings
- Being sensitive to values
- Listening with an open mind
- Imagining the implications of uncertain situations

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Mode 3 – How?
Converging (Analyzing)

Learners combine the learning processes of abstract conceptualization (AC) and active experimentation (AE). They are best at finding practical uses for ideas and theories.

Strengths: Problem solving, decision making, deductive reasoning, defining problems

If too much: Solving the wrong problem, hasty decision making

Areas needing focus: Lack of focus, no shifting of ideas / mistakes, scattered thoughts

To develop Mode 3 learning skills, practice:
- Creating new ways of thinking and doing
- Experimenting with new ideas
- Choosing the best solution
- Setting goals
- Making decisions

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Mode 2 – What?
Assimilating (Philosophy)

Learners combine the learning processes of abstract conceptualization (AC) and reflective observation (RO). They are best at understanding a wide range of information and putting it into concise, logical form.

Strengths: Planning, creating models, defining problems, developing theories

If too much: Castles in the air, no practical application

Areas needing focus: Difficulty learning from others, no sound basis for work, no systemic approach

To develop Mode 2 learning skills, practice:
- Organizing information
- Building conceptual models
- Testing theories and ideas
- Designing experiments
- Analyzing quantitative data

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From Dave Ellis, *Becoming a Master Student*

	doing (Active Experimentation - AE)	watching (Reflective Observation - RO)
feeling (Concrete Experience - CE)	**accommodating (CE/AE)**	**diverging (CE/RO)**
thinking (Abstract Conceptualization - AC)	**converging (AC/AE)**	**assimilating (AC/RO)**

Here are brief descriptions of the four Kolb learning styles:

Diverging (feeling and watching - CE/RO) - These people are able to look at things from different perspectives. They are sensitive. They prefer to watch rather than do, tending to gather information and use imagination to solve problems. They are best at viewing concrete situations several different viewpoints. Kolb called this style 'Diverging' because these people perform better in situations that require ideas-generation, for example, brainstorming. People with a Diverging learning style have broad cultural interests and like to gather information. They are interested in people, tend to be imaginative and emotional, and tend to be strong in the arts. People with the Diverging style prefer to work in groups, to listen with an open mind and to receive personal feedback.

Assimilating (watching and thinking - AC/RO) - The Assimilating learning preference is for a concise, logical approach. Ideas and concepts are more important than people. These people require good clear explanation rather than practical opportunity. They excel at understanding wide-ranging information and organising it a clear logical format. People with an Assimilating learning style are less focused on people and more interested in ideas and abstract concepts. People with this style are more attracted to logically sound theories than approaches based on practical value. These learning style people is important for effectiveness in information and science careers. In formal learning situations, people with this style prefer readings, lectures, exploring analytical models, and having time to think things through.

Converging (doing and thinking - AC/AE) - People with a Converging learning style can solve problems and will use their learning to find solutions to practical issues. They prefer technical tasks, and are less concerned with people and interpersonal aspects. People with a Converging learning style are best at finding practical uses for ideas and theories. They can solve problems and make decisions by finding solutions to questions and problems. People with a Converging learning style are more attracted to technical tasks and problems than social or interpersonal issues. A Converging learning style enables specialist and technology abilities. People with a Converging style like to experiment with new ideas, to simulate, and to work with practical applications.

Accommodating (doing and feeling - CE/AE) - The Accommodating learning style is 'hands-on', and relies on intuition rather than logic. These people use other people's analysis, and prefer to take a practical, experiential approach. They are attracted to new challenges and experiences, and to carrying out plans. They commonly act on 'gut' instinct rather than logical analysis. People with an Accommodating learning style will tend to rely on others for information than carry out their own analysis. This learning style is prevalent and useful in roles requiring action and initiative. People with an Accommodating learning style prefer to work in teams to complete tasks. They set targets and actively work in the field trying different ways to achieve an objective.

Kolb's Learning Cycle

Mode 4 learners continually apply their learning. **Preferred learning activities:** Open-ended problems, quality circles, open-ended labs, subjective tests, problems prepared by students, student lectures, student presentations	**Mode 1 learners want to create a personal connection with the content.** **Preferred learning activities:** Motivational stories, journal writing, simulations, subjective tests, group problem solving, Socratic lecture, role playing
Mode 3 learners are interested in learning new concepts and applying them. **Preferred learning activities:** Homework problems, lectures with demonstrations, guided labs, objective tests, Example problems worked by students, computer-aided instruction, individual reports	**Mode 2 learners want to gather information.** **Preferred learning activities:** Formal lectures, library searches, textbook reading, objective tests, problem solving by instructor, lectures with visual aids, independent research

From Dave Ellis, *Becoming a Master Student*