

Coping with College Series
Learning to Learn Your Way

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You like to study in complete silence, sitting at your desk, but your roommate always likes to study while reclining in the bean-bag chair with the stereo on. You just can't understand how someone could study with the stereo turned on. You and your roommate have the same Thursday night class and your roommate actually seems to like listening to the professor's lectures. You find it very difficult to pay attention to a lecture, especially for two hours straight. The professor does not use any visual aids and seems to wander from point to point making it hard for you to take organized notes.

Why do you and your roommate seem to study and learn so differently? The answer may relate to different styles of learning. Learning style refers to the way each person prefers to process information. Understanding your learning style can help you become a more effective student by helping you study in ways that maximize your ability to take in and retain what you are studying.

Here are a few thoughts to ponder when you start reflecting on your own learning style. First, what type of learning environment do you prefer? Do you like to study while lying on the bed, or do you like to sit in a hard-backed chair at a desk? Do you prefer the lights to be bright or dim. Do you prefer the temperature warm or cool? Try to either choose or create a study environment that meets your individual needs.

Second, think about how you most prefer to receive information. Are you able to listen to a lecture and remember information well, or do you prefer to learn visually through graphs, charts, etc.? Do you learn best with a hands-on approach like building models or making flash cards? Maybe you are an active learner who prefers to learn through the use of games or to study while standing or pacing?

Third, do you prefer to study alone or with others. If you prefer to study with others, you might consider forming study groups. Fourth, learn to study for your most difficult subjects during the time of day when you will be most alert and the most productive.

Finally, are you a "global" or an "analytical" learner? Global learners like to understand concepts before learning details. However, analytical learners like to learn information step-by-step until concepts are understood. Most college-level instruction takes an analytical approach. If you tend to be a global learner,

you can work through this by asking questions of the professor to try to clarify concepts or principles. You can also read the text by scanning the headings and chapter summaries, before going back to read for details.

Remember there is no “right” learning style. There is no one approach to studying or reading that works for everyone. However, understanding your learning style can help you study more effectively. If you are interested in obtaining a more comprehensive assessment of your learning style, contact the University Center for Learning Assistance (133 Stevenson Hall) at 438-7100.