

Accommodating Varied Learning Styles

Recognize your own style and how it influences the way you teach—Teachers with more analytic styles may want to make an effort to develop explanation that will be clear to student whose styles are more intuitive and inductive. Teachers with strongly intuitive styles may want to develop course materials that draw on their analytic students' needs for definition and structure

But don't try to match your teaching methods to students' learning styles—there is no consensus in the research about whether matching teaching methods to learning styles increases learning; some research shows no measurable gains in matching instruction to students' learning preferences.

Be sensitive to the relationships of learning style, ethnicity, and gender—some research suggests that there may be relationships between culture, conceptual systems, and learning styles. In addition, a student's previous educational experiences, family relationships, socioeconomic class, and academic environment all contribute to his or her learning style.

Vary you teaching strategies, assignments, and learning activities—give students opportunities to do group work as well as to work alone. Provide options for assignments: written papers, oral reports, and videotapes. Present the same information in several modes (lecture, reading, audiovisual materials, and hands-on activities).

Give exams that call on students to think in different ways

Questions that ask students to give specific information or select the correct answer from alternatives call for convergent thinking.

Open-ended essay questions call on student to generate solutions to problems and think in divergent ways.

Questions that ask students to compare and contrast test assimilative thinking.

Questions calling for practical application of theoretical principles support accommodative thinking.

Encourage students to value different learning styles and orientations—Students may prefer to work with people whose learning styles are similar to their own, but some research suggests that although students with the same style enjoy working together, they learn less effectively because they reinforce each other's weaknesses.