

QuickTip: Learning Styles

Do you ever coach, mentor, or teach others? Most leaders do, but sometimes their message doesn't "stick" because their teaching method doesn't fit the style of their learner. You can fix this with a bit of insight about learning styles.

Research shows that different people learn in different ways. There are four major learning styles – let's call them *why*, *why not*, *how does it work*, and *what if*. You have a natural teaching style, which is probably centered on the learning style you personally prefer. Your teaching style may be different than what your learner needs. When you understand what learning style works best for the person you are helping, you can tune your approach to be more effective.

Type of Learner	What They Want	How to Meet Their Need
Why	Understand why they should learn about this topic <u>now</u>	Explain the purpose and benefits of what you're teaching
What	Learn the relevant facts with a minimum of fluff	Show an outline of the material to be covered and where additional documentation can be found
How does it work	Know how this idea fits into the big picture	Give context and describe how the idea connects with key goals
What if	Test the ideas you're teaching to them	Leave time in your agenda to discuss the possibilities and application of the ideas

What if you're working with a group instead of one person? Assume that they have a variety of learning styles and try to address all four. The techniques for each style are complementary, so you can often meet the needs of several styles at once by adding just a bit of refinement to what you already have.

You can dive deeper into learning styles in chapter six of Steve Trautman's *Teach What You Know*, a book about how to set up effective peer mentoring. The four learning styles are based on work by David Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*.