



## Tool 4.5

### Your preferred learning style

This questionnaire may help you pinpoint your learning preferences so that you are in a better position to select learning experiences that suit your personal style.

- There are no right or wrong answers
- Read each box and if you agree with the statement more than you disagree, put a tick in that box
- At the end of each page, add up the number of ticks in each column

I often act without considering the possible consequences	I like the sort of work where I have time for proper preparation	I have strong beliefs about what is right and wrong and good and bad	I have a reputation for saying what I think, simply and directly
I often find that actions based on feelings are as sound as those based on careful thought and analysis	I take care over the interpretation of research available to me and avoid jumping to conclusions	I am keen on self-discipline like sticking to a fixed routine, watching what I eat, being planned and systematic	When I hear about a new idea or approach, I immediately start working out how to apply it in practice
I prefer to respond to events on a spontaneous, flexible basis rather than plan things out in advance	I prefer to have as many sources of information as possible; the more information to think over the better	I get on best with logical, analytical people and less well with spontaneous "irrational" people	What matters most is that something works in practice
I'm attracted more to new, unusual ideas rather than practical ones	I think that decisions based on thorough study of all the information are sounder than those based on intuition	I don't like disorganised things and prefer to fit things into a coherent pattern	I accept and stick to laid down procedures and plans so long as I regard them as an efficient way of getting the job done
I thrive on the challenge of tackling something new and different	I like to reach a decision carefully after weighing up many alternatives	I like to relate what I do to a general principle in use	In discussions, I like to get straight to the point
I enjoy the drama and excitement of a crisis situation	I listen to other people's points of view before putting my own forward	I tend to have distant, formal relations with people in my area	I tend to judge people's ideas on their practical merits
I tend to be open about how I am feeling	In discussions, I enjoy watching the manoeuvrings of the other participants	Flippant people who don't take things seriously enough usually irritate me	In groups, I tend to put forward practical, realistic ideas
I actively seek out new experiences	It worries me if I have to rush something to meet a deadline	I find it difficult to produce ideas on impulse	I can often see better, more practical ways to get things done
<b>A =</b>	<b>R =</b>	<b>T =</b>	<b>P =</b>



Quiet, thoughtful people tend to make me feel uneasy	I pay meticulous attention to detail before coming to conclusions	I tend to be tough on people who find it difficult to adopt a logical approach	I like people who approach things realistically rather than theoretically
It is more important to enjoy the present moment than to think about the past or the future	I prefer to stand back from a situation and consider all the perspectives	I can often see inconsistencies and weaknesses in other people's arguments	In discussions, I get impatient with irrelevancies and digressions
In discussions, I tend to produce lots of ideas, spontaneously	I tend to discuss specific things with people rather than engaging in social discussion	I believe that rational, logical thinking should win the day	In discussions, I often find that I am the realist, keeping people on track and avoiding wild speculation
More often than not, rules are there to be broken	I like to ponder many alternatives before making up my mind	I am keen to reach answers via a logical approach	I am keen to try things out to see if they work in practice
On balance, I talk more than I listen	In discussions, I am more likely to adopt a low profile than to take the lead	In discussions with people, I often find I am the most dispassionate and objective	Most times, I believe the end justifies the means
When things go wrong, I am happy to shrug it off and "put it down to experience"	It's best to think carefully before taking action	I like to be able to relate current actions to a longer-term, bigger picture	I don't mind hurting people's feelings so long as the job gets done
I'm usually one of the people who puts life into the party	On balance, I do the listening rather than the talking	I tend to be a perfectionist	I do whatever is the quickest and most effective to get things done
I quickly get bored with methodical, detailed work	I'm always interested to find out what people think	I steer clear of subjective or ambiguous topics	People often find me insensitive to their feelings
<b>A =</b>	<b>R =</b>	<b>T =</b>	<b>P =</b>

To pinpoint your preferred learning style, add the number of 'ticks' in each column and place the number at the bottom of the column in each of the two previous tables. Add the respective column scores together and record your scores in the following table.

<b>A</b> <b>(Activist) Do</b>	<b>R</b> <b>(Reflector) Review</b>	<b>T</b> <b>(Theorist) Generalise</b>	<b>P</b> <b>(Pragmatist) Plan</b>

This table profiles your own individual learning approach, the higher the score for each of the four styles the more you prefer to learn this way, and vice versa.

## **Learning styles – general descriptions**

Each learning style adds to the ability to solve problems in a different way as described below.

### **Activists – act**

Activists involve themselves fully and without bias in new experiences. They enjoy the here and now and are happy to be dominated by immediate experiences. They are open-minded, not sceptical, and this tends to make them enthusiastic about anything new. Their philosophy is “I’ll try anything once”. They dash in where angels fear to tread. They tend to throw caution to the wind. Their days are filled with activity. They revel in short-term crisis firefighting. They tackle problems by brainstorming. As soon as the excitement from one activity has died down they are busy looking for the next. They tend to thrive on the challenge of new experiences but are bored with implementation and longer-term consolidation. They are gregarious people, constantly involving themselves with others, but in doing so, they hog the limelight. They are the life and soul of the party, and seek to centre all activities around themselves.

### **Reflectors – reflect**

Reflectors like to stand back to ponder experiences and observe them from many different perspectives. They collect data, both first-hand and from others, and prefer to chew it over thoroughly before coming to any conclusion. The thorough collection and analysis of data about experiences and events is what counts so they tend to postpone reaching definitive conclusions for as long as possible. Their philosophy is to be cautious; to leave no stone unturned. “Look before you leap”, “sleep on it”. They are thoughtful people, who like to consider all possible angles and implications before making a move. They prefer to take a back seat in meetings and discussions. They enjoy observing other people in action. They tend to adopt a low profile and have a slightly distant, tolerant unruffled air about them. When they act it is part of a big picture which includes the past as well as the present and others’ observations as well as their own.

### **Theorists – generalise**

Theorists adapt and integrate observations into complex but logically sound theories. They think problems through in a vertical, step-by-step, logical way. They assimilate disparate factors into coherent theories. They tend to be perfectionists and won’t rest easy until things are tidy and fit into their rational scheme. They like to analyse and synthesise. Their philosophy prizes rationality and logic. “If it’s logical it’s good”. Questions they frequently ask are: “Does it make sense?”; “How does this fit with that?”; and “What are the basic assumptions?” They tend to be detached, analytical and dedicated to rational objectivity rather than anything subjective or ambiguous. Their approach to problems is consistently logical. This is their “mental set” and they rigidly reject anything that doesn’t fit with it. They prefer to maximise certainty and feel uncomfortable with subjective judgements, lateral thinking and anything flippant.

### **Pragmatists – plan**

Pragmatists are keen on trying out ideas, theories and techniques to see if they work in practice. They positively search out new ideas and take the first opportunity to experiment with applications. They are the sort of people who return from management courses brimming with new ideas that they want to try out in practice. They like to get on with things and act quickly and confidently on ideas that attract them. They don’t like beating around the bush and tend to be impatient with ruminating and open-ended discussions. They are essentially practical, down-to-earth people who like making practical decisions and solving problems. They respond to problems and opportunities “as a challenge”. Their philosophies are “There is always a better way”, and “If it works, it’s good”.

**Key questions to improve your business**

**What different learning styles do you have in your business?**

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**How can you best use people's learning styles?**

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Adapted from: On Track Coaching Manual for Farm Families Working with People (2005)