

Creative Teaching Methods

Introduction

As you will appreciate there are whole books written about effective teaching and learning, but here is a very basic introduction and some key points to consider when communicating.

'Learning' involves a change in an individual's knowledge, skill, values or attitudes which lasts over a period of time.

Adults learn best (Knowles, 1970) when they:

- see the relevance and value of what they are learning and know what goals are set,
- can relate what they are doing to past experiences and can contribute their thoughts ideas and feelings about what they are learning,
- are being active (doing things) rather than passive (being told),
- are treated as responsible adults capable of self direction (given choices, have their experiences taken into consideration),

How we take in information

To get our messages across to people it is important to understand that most adults best receive information through what they see, then by hearing and hands on experience.

Why bother with visual aids?

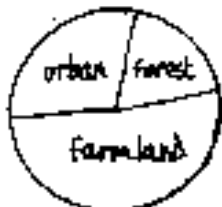
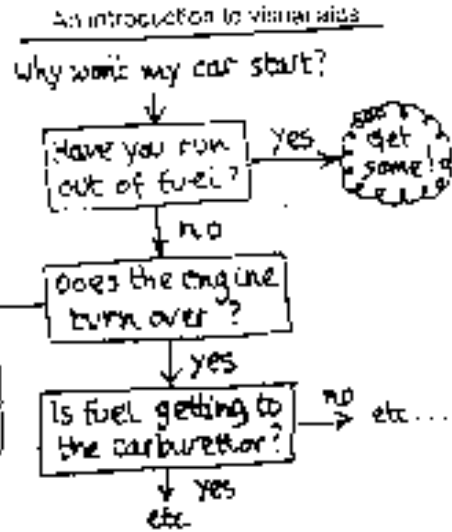
The use of more than one sense (e.g. sight and sound) enhances understanding and memory. Six times (yes that's 6x) more of what we learn is through sight rather than listening. Do we provide 6x the opportunity to learn by sight? We speak at approx 150-200 words per minute but think at approx 600-800 words per minute. We can fill the differential between the two speeds by giving a visual to focus on – otherwise people's minds wander. Learners have to work hard to maintain their attention spans to make sense of the talking and explaining they hear. Using visuals will help by:

- **Gaining and maintaining attention**
An image is more difficult to ignore- learners focus their view on the resource rather than another distraction
- **Adding variety and interest**
Our short attention spans are assisted by the variety and change that can be introduced by the use of visuals
- **Aiding conceptualisation**
Often useful to see what the whole thing looks like so that we can understand what something is all about in context
- **Aiding memory**
Research shows that visual information is easier to remember than verbal information
- **Showing that you care**
It requires effort on the trainers part to find accessible ways to present information. The focus is on the learners.

Here are examples of simple ways to make information visual



Venn diagram



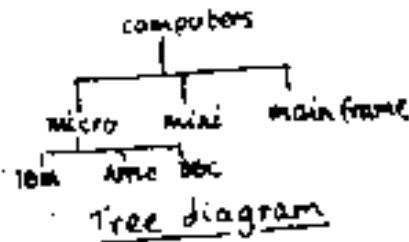
Pie diagram



Bar chart



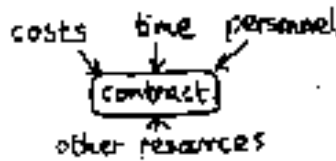
Line graph



Tree diagram



Tree planting schedule
Pictorial representation



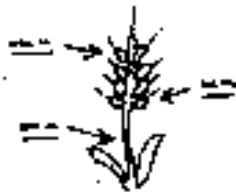
Arrow diagram



Flow chart



Cartoon



Labelled diagram



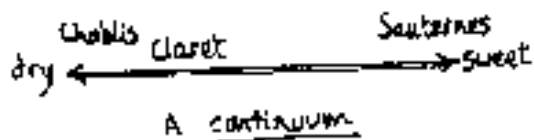
Series of diagrams



Mind map

	cost	time	total
Erwin	£10	2.00	✓
Coach	£105	3.00	x

A matrix



A continuum

More Differences In How We Learn.

There are 3 distinct communication and learning styles. All of us use all 3 types to some degree but tend to prefer one. Visual preferences tend to dominate (70% of our bodies sensory receptors are in our eyes)

Visual (seeing)

Learning through seeing; like pictures/diagrams/ videos/ demonstrations

Auditory (hearing)

Learning through hearing; like to listen to tapes/ lectures/ debates/ discussions

Kinaesthetic (experiencing)

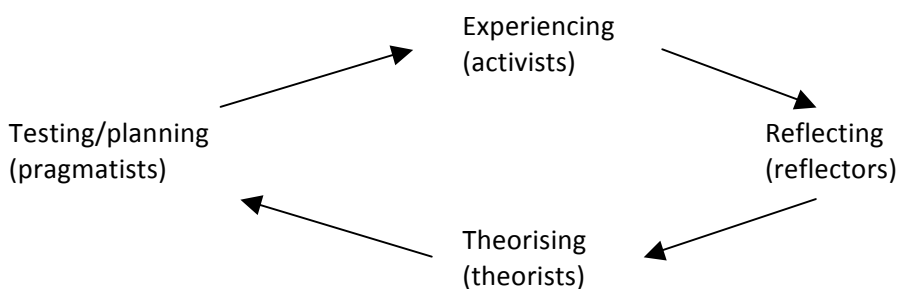
Learning through physical activities and direct involvement; hands on/moving/touching / experiencing

Chinese Proverb:

I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand

Kolb's Learning Cycle.

When we learn we pass through this cycle:



Adults tend to prefer one of the four stages of the learning cycle. They tend to learn best when the learning opportunities match their preferred learning style. In any group there will be a range of preferred learning styles; different training methods will appeal to different learning styles so a range of methods / approaches will need to be used.

HONEY & MUMFORD'S LEARNING STYLES

ACTIVISTS involve themselves fully in new experiences and like to be involved in activity. They relish coping with crises, are optimistic about anything new and are unlikely to resist change. Once the initial excitement is over they tend to get bored with implementation and consolidation. They enjoy working with others but tend to do too much themselves and hog the limelight.

REFLECTORS like to collect all the facts and to look at situations from all the angles. They are careful and methodical and dislike reaching a conclusion until they have thought it through thoroughly. They prefer to take a back seat, observing and listening to others but often tend to be too cautious and not take enough risks.

THEORISTS approach situations logically, working through step by step, integrating their observations into complex theories. They tend to be perfectionists and reject ideas they see as subjective or intuitive. Their disciplined approach restricts their ability to think creatively and they are unlikely to be prepared to give it ago and see what happens.

PRAGMATISTS are practical, businesslike individuals who like to get straight to the point. They are full of ideas and keen to try them out straight away. They are most comfortable with things that they know are going to work and tend to reject ideas without an obvious application. They are impatient with what they see as 'waffle' If you are a pragmatist, beware of a tendency to seize on the first expedient solution to a problem.

Over-reliance on a particular style can become a weakness. If you are equally effective at all stages of the cycle you will increase your potential to be good learners from all kinds of activities.

Individual Learning Styles

Honey & Mumford found that adults tend to favour one of the four stages of Kolb's Learning cycle. Adults develop preferences and seem to learn best when the learning opportunities match their preferred learning style.

In any group of learners there will be a range of preferred learning styles. Different training methods will appeal to different learning styles so a range of methods / approaches will need to be used.

Stages of the Learning Cycle	Learning Style	Characterised by...	Appropriate methods
Experiencing	Activist	<i>"I'll try anything once. "</i>	Activists enjoy methods that involve lots of new experiences, short 'here and now' activities and role playing exercise.
Reflecting	Reflector	<i>"I'd like time to think about this"</i>	Reflectors will learn best when they are given time to watch, think and chew over activities, and have a chance to review.
Theorising	Theorist	<i>"How does this relate to that?"</i>	Theorists will learn best when they can explore methodically and consider the relationship between ideas and situations, and are intellectually stretched. <i>(Want models & concepts that underpin things)</i>
Testing / Planning	Pragmatist	<i>"How can I apply this in practice?"</i>	Pragmatists will like to see immediate relevance between an activity and a problem or opportunity at work, something that has a practical use or application.

You can usually tell your learning style from how you approach flatpack furniture:-

Activist: All out of the box, start, 'have a go' and give up

Theorist: All in order, systematic approach, prepare start to finish

Reflector: Look at the plans and think

Pragmatist: Give it to someone else to do