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Counselor Handbook

A counselor/advisor's guide for using
learning styles and preferences
to understand, counsel and advise

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Introduction

TruTalent® Learning & Productivity is a 20-minute online survey of an individual's learning styles and productivity preferences and consists of 54 statements. Individuals indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement, and these responses are used to calculate the results. The results are calculated instantly and can be used by students/clients, professionals, and administrators to help adapt the individual's environment and approach to learning.

Summary of TruTalent Learning & Productivity properties

- Survey of 54 statements on a 1-5 scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.
- Takes approximately 20 minutes.
- Results are immediately generated after last response is submitted.
- Show the individual's learning preferences for 4 styles and 12 environmental and mindset preferences.
- See how strong or "important" each preference is for that particular individual.
- Report is intended to be used by students/clients, professionals and/or administrators.

Impact of Learning and Productivity Preferences

- Studies have demonstrated discipline, generational and gender differences in productivity preferences (Cambiano et al., 2001; Hallin, 2014); awareness of such differences may enhance communication and productivity in learning and the workplace.
- Having an understanding of learning and productivity preferences increases motivation to learn, leading to increased satisfaction and productivity.
- Learning preferences can impact self-efficacy and confidence (Dumbauld et al, 2014).
- See statistical analysis at <https://assets.humanesources.com/materials/TT-LearningProductivity-Statistical-Analysis.pdf>
- See other supporting research at <https://assets.humanesources.com/materials/TTLP-Supporting-Research.pdf>

References

Cambiano, R.L., De Vore, J.B., & Harvey, R.L. (2001). Learning Style Preferences of the Cohorts: Generation X, Baby Boomers, and the Silent Generation. *PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning*, 10, 31-39.

Dumbauld, J., Black, M., Depp, C. A., Daly, R., Curran, M. A., Winegarden, B., & Jeste, D. V. (2014). Association of Learning Styles with Research Self-Efficacy: Study of Short-Term Research Training Program for Medical Students. *Clinical and Translational Science*, 7(6), 489-492.

Hallin, K. (2014). Nursing students at a university - a study about learning style preferences. *Nurse Education Today*, 34(12), 1443-1449.

The scales

The 16 learning and productivity preferences measured by *TruTalent Learning & Productivity* are grouped into three categories. Each preference is represented on a scale that ranges between two possible preferences at either end of the scale – see Table 1. Extended definitions of each of the styles is shown in Table 2.

Table 1 - Learning styles, categories and preferences

| Category | Style | Preference A | Preference B |
|----------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Sensory | Auditory Learning | Low Auditory | High Auditory |
| | Kinesthetic Learning | Low Kinesthetic | High Kinesthetic |
| | Tactile Learning | Low Tactile | High Tactile |
| | Visual Learning | Low Visual | High Visual |
| Environmental | Intake Level | No Intake | Likes Intake |
| | Light Level | Low Light | Bright Light |
| | Temperature | Cool Environment | Warm Environment |
| | Mobility | Stillness | Mobility |
| | Sound Level | Quiet in Background | Sound in Background |
| | Design | Casual Setting | Traditional Setting |
| | Time of Day | Late in the Day | Early in the Day |
| Mindset | Instructor Motivation | Low Authority Motivation | High Authority Motivation |
| | Collaborative or Independent | Independent | Collaborative |
| | Structure | Less Structure | More Structure |
| | Focus | Low Focus | High Focus |
| | Self-Motivation | Low Self-Motivation | High Self-Motivation |

Table 2 - Learning Style Definitions

| Style | Definition |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Auditory Learning | Preference for learning information through auditory perception: listening to others speak or audio recordings. |
| Kinesthetic Learning | Preference for learning information through kinesthetic perception: activities that involve significant movement and use of the body in the learning activity. For example, role playing, interactive "learning stations", laboratory procedures, and building physical objects. |
| Tactile Learning | Preference for receiving information through touch and manipulation with the hands. A good example of a tactile preference is taking notes when hearing a lecture or receiving instructions. |
| Visual Learning | Preference for receiving information through visual perception. This includes text, pictures, charts, video and physical objects. |
| Intake Level | Preference for intake when studying or learning new or difficult material. Many individuals are able to learn better if they're able to chew or nibble on something when they are learning. Other individuals are distracted by intake and prefer to study or learn without having intake available. |
| Light Level | Preference for learning environments that have a lot of light versus more dimly lit conditions. |
| Mobility | Preference for having the freedom to move during the learning activity. Rather than the movement directly related to the learning activity, this refers to movement such as pacing, fidgeting and adjusting position. |
| Sound Level | Preference for working and learning in an environment that contains some background sounds versus an environment that is very quiet. |
| Design | Preference for formal or informal study environment. Identifies whether individuals prefer a formal learning environment (chair and desk) or a more relaxed setting (couch or bed) in terms of the physical space. |
| Temperature | This preference indicates whether the individual prefers cool or warm environments. |
| Time of Day | Preference for working and learning earlier in the day versus later in the day. Individuals are more productive during their preferred time of day. It is important to allow individuals to learn their most difficult material during their preferred time of day. |
| Collaborative or Independent | Preference for learning while alone or interacting with peers. |
| Self-Motivation | Motivation for learning which is academic or school-based: involves classrooms, instructors, textbooks, assignments, tests, and others school-related activities. |

| Style | Definition |
|------------------------------|--|
| Structure | Preference for work and assignments that have a lot of structure versus work that is more open-ended. Structured work would have detailed steps to follow, whereas open-ended work would allow individuals to make more decisions about what is learned and how it is learned. |
| Focus | Amount of follow-through, seeing work to its completion and ability to stay focused and on-task. Also, the ability to focus for long periods in the face of difficulty. |
| Instructor Motivation | Amount of motivation derived from the student's instructors, counselors and other educators. This preference identifies whether students learn to please those with authority. |

Taking the survey

Just prior to starting the *TruTalent Learning & Productivity* survey, participants should be briefed on a few things to ensure they get optimal results. The briefing should only take five minutes or less. Suggested points to cover are listed below.

Briefing Prior to Taking the Survey

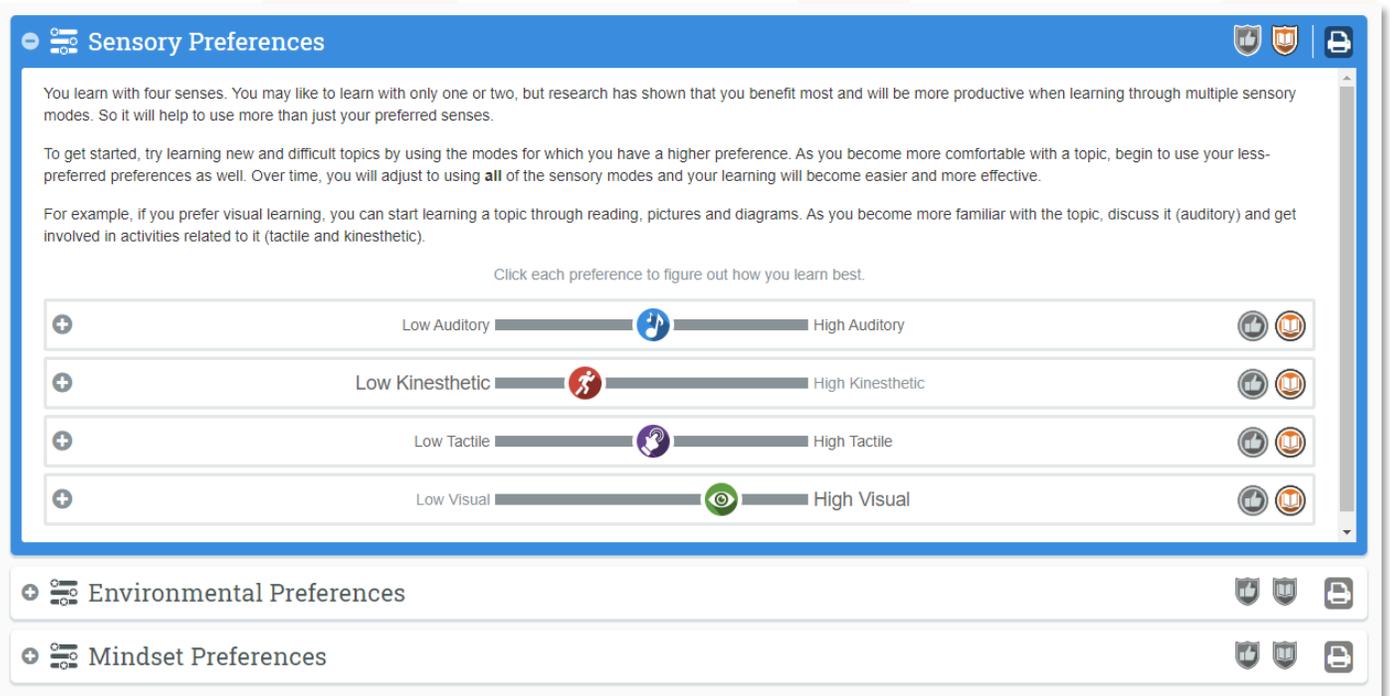
- Relax. This is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers. It is a survey of your personal preferences of how you learn and work best.
- Be completely honest with responses. Do not respond with what you think is appropriate or best for all individuals. Respond with your true preference.
- Be aware that some statements may seem to be very similar or opposite to others. This is intentional and helps with the accuracy of the results. Just continue to be honest with every response.
- Your individual responses are considered private and should not be discussed or shared during the exercise.
- You can go back and change responses to previous statements, but once you submit your final response, the results are locked.

The individual's responses to the survey are analyzed to determine where on the scale the individual is for each preference. For each preference, they may be at one end of the scale or the other, or they may be in the middle, which means they have no significant preference.

Results

The results generated for the individual displays their preferences, or lack thereof, in a chart. The strongest preferences are shown along the continuum, from low to high. Preferences are grouped by Sensory, Environmental, and Mindset – see Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 - Sensory Preferences section of report



Click the “+” sign in each of the headings to expand that section and receive recommendations for the individual that relate to utilizing that preference – see Figure 2.

Figure 2 - Environmental Preferences section of report

The screenshot shows a web-based report interface with three main sections: Sensory Preferences, Environmental Preferences, and Mindset Preferences. The 'Environmental Preferences' section is highlighted in blue and contains the following content:

- Environmental Preferences** header with a minus icon and a plus icon.
- Introductory text: "These are simple preferences that don't need to be developed like the sensory preferences. For these, simply change your work environment, when reasonable, to suit your strongest preferences. If changing your environment isn't possible, learn how to adapt to it." and "Click each preference to figure out how you work best."
- A progress bar for "Intake" ranging from "No Intake" to "Likes Intake", with a thumbs-up icon in the center.
- Intake** section: "Intake refers to eating and drinking. Some people are more productive if they're able to eat or drink something while learning or working. Other people find it distracting. You have a high preference for intake. You like to eat or drink while learning or working. It can help you be productive."
- Recommendations** section: "Based on your results, you may want to eat or drink something while learning or working. Read the following recommendations and select the ones you think would work best for you."
 - Changing Work Environment**
 - If you need to eat or drink while working, take a break to have something and return when you've finished.
 - Just before a meeting or presentation, eat a healthy meal or snack. Make sure it's enough to prevent you from feeling hungry during the event, but not so much that you feel overly full.
 - Adapting to Environment**
 - Have water and nutritious snacks available while you're working.
 - Chew gum or eat small snacks while you're working.
 - Avoid sugary treats or too much caffeine, which can have a negative effect on your productivity.
 - If food is not permitted in your work area, try to eat shortly beforehand so you won't be distracted by hunger.
- A thumbs-up icon and text: "Select at least one recommendation from each group to earn a pin for this section"
- A progress bar for "Light" ranging from "Low Light" to "Bright Light", with a lightbulb icon in the center.
- Bottom navigation bar with a plus icon, a minus icon, and a print icon.

Follow up

Once individuals have their results they should prioritize which tips and strategies they want to implement over the next few weeks. Tips under the strongest preferences (closest to a preference) are a good starting place, as they have the potential to provide the most benefit.

The following information provides some general guidance on implementing the strategies in the report. The guidance is divided amongst the three categories shown in Table 3.

Table 3 – TruTalent Learning & Productivity, categories and general implementation strategy

| Category | Style | General Guidelines for Implementing Results |
|---------------|------------------------------|--|
| Sensory | Auditory | While individuals may have a preference for one or two sensory types, research has shown that individuals benefit most from using multiple sensory learning styles. A good approach is for individuals to start learning new and difficult topics using their preferred style(s). As they become more comfortable with a topic, they can begin to use their less preferred sensory styles. This will help develop their abilities in all sensory styles. |
| | Kinesthetic | |
| | Tactile | |
| | Visual | |
| Environmental | Intake | These styles are simple preferences that don't need any development like sensory styles do. For these styles, individuals should simply make modifications to their learning environments to accommodate their existing preferences. They should also be aware, however, that sometimes they may be in situations where they <i>cannot</i> make certain modifications. |
| | Light | |
| | Temperature | |
| | Mobility | |
| | Sound | |
| | Design | |
| | Time of Day | |
| Mindset | Collaborative or Independent | While individuals may prefer <i>either</i> learning and working in a collaborative way, <i>or</i> independently, they should develop their abilities for both. When learning something new and difficult, they should try to go with their preference. As they become more comfortable with a topic, they should try to learn in the opposite way. If a individual starts with no strong preference either way, they should alternate learning styles as it suits the situation. |

| | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Mindset Continued | Instructor Motivation | Neither end of the scale has any advantage over the other. As best as possible, individuals should be accommodated based on their preference and do NOT need to change their position on the scale. Authority-motivated individuals benefit from plenty of feedback, and when those of authority interact with them. Low Authority Motivated people benefit from minimal interaction with those of authority. <i>However</i> , individuals at the Low Authority Motivated end of the scale may have issues because of a negative past experience. This scale is not designed to measure or address this type of issue and something like this should be addressed independently of this assessment. |
| | Structure | While individuals may prefer <i>either</i> learning and working in a structured way, <i>or</i> in a more open style, they should work towards developing their abilities for both. When learning something new and difficult, they should try to go with their preference. As they become more comfortable with a topic, they should try to learn in the opposite way. If an individual starts with no strong preference either way, they should alternate their learning style as it suits the situation. |
| | Focus | More focus is an advantage for performance. The tips in the report provide guidance for developing more focus. Developing focus occurs when individuals clearly identify their priorities. They should also identify what tends to distract them and create plans to avoid those distractions. It is important to remember, however, that it is possible to have too much focus on academic studies or work. Research shows that some leisure time is important for brain development in the areas of creativity. |
| | Self-Motivation | Higher self-motivation is an advantage for academic performance. The tips in the report provide guidance for increasing self-motivation. The key to developing self-motivation is for individuals to find something they care about in their work and to make the connection between what they learn and what their goals are. If they clearly see how their learning can help them accomplish their goals, they will be more self-motivated. |

Follow-up Activity

Applying Learning Styles

Learning Outcome(s):

Learn how to apply specific learning and productivity strategies to school situations

Time Needed: 60 minutes

Prerequisites: Completion of TruTalent Learning & Productivity

Materials Needed: Applying Learning Styles Handout - attached

Each individual should have their printed TruTalent Learning & Productivity report with them (or access to a computer that can display it).

Introductory Activity:

Tell participants that they will be using their TruTalent Learning & Productivity results to learn how to apply the strategies and advice described in the report. They will be given scenarios which apply to their learning and productivity styles.

At this point you can decide whether you want participants to do this individually, in small or large groups, or some combination thereof. If you are using groups, styles will differ - the assignment could require each group to produce varied strategies while identifying which learning and productivity styles each of those strategies would suit.

Core Activities:

Distribute the Learning Styles Handout (attached) and give the participants enough time to complete it (approximately 30-40 minutes) – allow enough time at the end to share answers and discuss the rationale behind their answers.

Variations/Extensions:

Get each individual to commit to actually carrying out one or two of their strategies over the next two weeks and be prepared to talk about the results of using their strategies.

Applying Learning Styles

Handout

How would you use the knowledge of your learning and productivity styles to deal with the following learning situations? Your instructor may use this exercise for a group activity and class discussion. Record your answers on a separate sheet.

1. You have just been given an assignment that requires you to research a topic and write at least five pages on it.
2. You have to study for a challenging math test.
3. You have to write up a lab report for a science class. The report must include drawings or diagrams related to the experiment.
4. You are taking a required course that is taught in an open, unstructured manner. It requires you to take initiative and to make decisions on what and how you learn.
5. You have been assigned a group project to design a small business.
6. Your P.E. class is starting a unit on gymnastics in which you have to create and perform a gymnastics routine.
7. A new construction project has started next to where you live. A lot of noise comes from there during the hours you normally study and do your schoolwork.
8. You have to prepare a five-minute oral presentation for your history class.
9. In the corner of the classroom where you normally sit, the ceiling light is out and cannot be fixed for the next two weeks.