

Lifelong Learning



Learning Styles for Equines

For horses and humans there has been a lot of work undertaken in this area. For educating horses many horsemanship practitioners have studied this in detail and produced excellent resources for horse owners to use. As we are all on different pathways I will share here only two books I found provided some useful insights.

- **What Horses Reveal** by Klaus Ferdinand Hempfling.
- **Is Your Horse a Rock Star?** Understanding Your Horse's Personality by Dessa Hockley

Learning Styles for Us

For us, have you ever found yourself struggling to understand what a teacher / instructor is trying to teach you and wondered why you don't get it? If this has been your experience your teacher's delivery style may not match your learning style. These bad experiences often make people feel they are not good at learning. It can in turn cause people to lack confidence and lose belief in their abilities. I have come across people that have had very bad educational experiences may be as far back as early school years which can lead to a very negative outlook on learning. And result in making them reluctant to access learning opportunities. When you learn in a style that matches your learning style, learning becomes logical, easy to understand and most of all fun. Here we will introduce this topic to provide some insights.

Lifelong Learning for Us

- Did you know that individuals learn in many different ways?
- Do you know your preferred learning style?
- If you teach, facilitate learning or tutor do you deliver in more than one delivery method so you can cater for different learning styles?

What are Learning Styles?

There are many theories about how people learn. There is lots of FREE information on learning styles available on the internet and in libraries. Here you are provided with a very simple overview to give you an insight.

Most theories cover three aspects of how people learn:

- Perceiving Information
- Processing Information
- Organising, Using and Presenting Information.

Perceiving Information

When we learn we gather information using all our senses. However we all have personal preferences. We use some or all of the following:

- **Visual (sight).** Visual learners use visualisation to interpret information e.g. pictures, maps, diagrams etc.
- **Auditory (hearing).** If you find taking in information using hearing is your preferred method you will find discussion and debate useful with your learning.
- **Reading and Writing.** Some people learn best by reading and writing.
- **Kinaesthetic (includes touch and movement).** If you learn best by touch and movement you need to learn by physically engaging into a task. You learn by doing, hands on, feeling, movement etc.

Processing Information

Gathering and how we perceive information is the first stage of how we learn. The next stage is that you process it mentally. You will have a preference for how you process the information. Do you prefer to:-

- Grasp information by dealing with generalisations and abstract concepts? Or practical examples?
- Order information in a logical step by step process? Or with an overview first and then break down the details?
- Engage with the information by experimentation? Or reflect? Or observe?

There are four main preferences for processing information; they are Activists, Reflectors, Theorists and Pragmatists.

Activists like:-

- Experiencing new challenges
- Completing tasks
- Problem solving, developing new ideas and concepts
- Competitive team work
- Variety, change and excitement
- Leading discussions
- Having a go and getting stuck in

Reflectors like:-

- To observe
- Thinking and pondering
- To have time to consider before taking action
- Finding out more information
- To review what they have learnt
- Structured activities
- To analyse information
- Compare information

Theorists like:-

- Information presented as part of an overall system, theory or concept
- To work methodically
- To question and probe methodology and logic
- Structured situations
- A clear purpose
- Interesting ideas even if they are not immediately relevant

Pragmatists like:-

- Solving real life problems
- Practical techniques
- Trying out new techniques
- Coaching with feedback
- Practical approaches

Organising, Using and Presenting Information

After you have perceived and processed the information the next stage is how you choose to share what you have learnt with other people, provide feedback to your teacher and how you use what you have learnt. Again you will have a personal preference of how you do this. Some people choose to organise the information they have learnt with either a holistic overview or with a detailed logical analysis. Others prefer to present what they have learnt verbally or using images.

Exercise

What type of learner are you? You can find out what type of learner you are at Vark

<https://vark-learn.com/the-vark-questionnaire/>

What we have explored is a very brief and simplified overview on learning styles. It is a springboard for more learning if you are interested in finding out more.

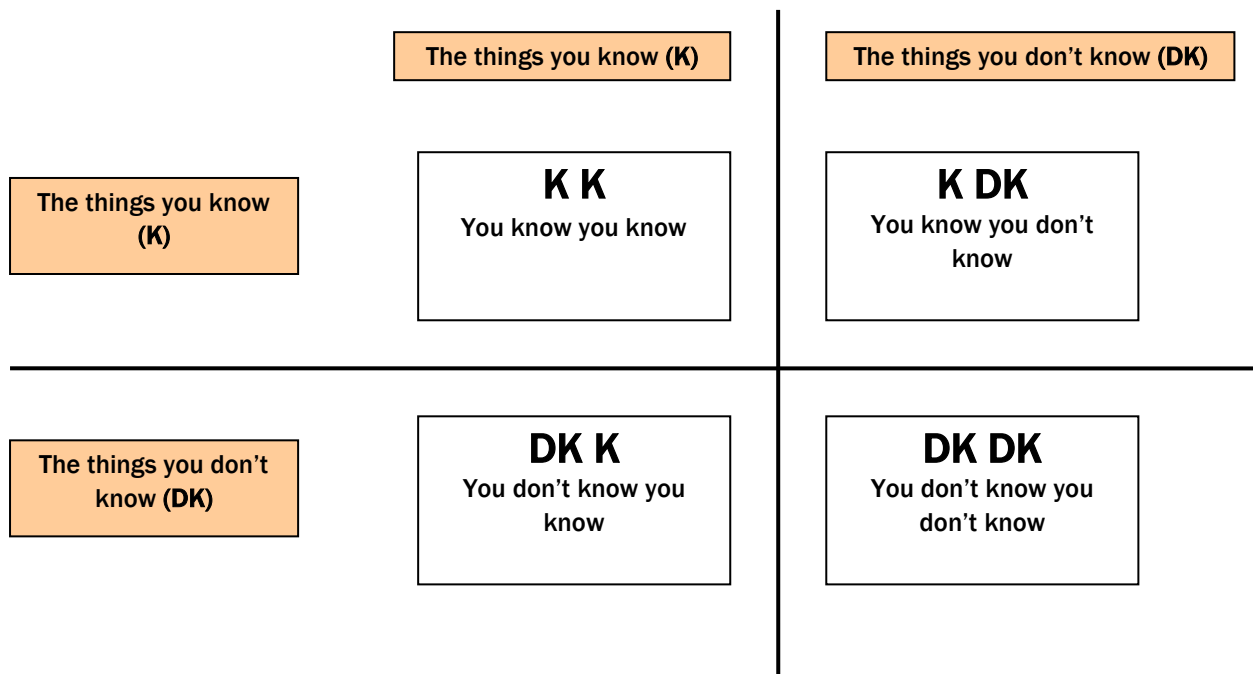
How to Maximise Your Learning

Have you ever considered how you could get more out of your own learning? Or how you can set the agendas in your learning? I guess the answer to this maybe not. For many of us our experiences of education have been modelled on the traditional classroom formula, which is mostly lead by the teacher, who sets the agenda, pace and selects the delivery style of the teaching.

Outside a traditional educational setting you can take control of your learning, you can decide what and how you want to learn. And you can maximise your learning by becoming more aware of your thinking, your knowledge and lack of knowledge. This means taking responsibility for your thinking.

You need to challenge your knowledge as sometimes it can be flawed and be incorrect. This is true when we base what we know on assumptions. In short to maximise your learning question your thinking.

A Simple Mind Map



How does a mind map help?

K DK – Know You Don't Know

By becoming more aware of your goals and dreams for your learning use the area of the mind map know you don't know. This area of the map is often easy for people to work on first. Once you have your list of what you would like to learn you can take action. However as you can see from the mind map this is one quarter of the mind map, how would it be if people open up to using the other three quarters?

Action – Make a list of what you want to learn. Be active in researching and finding out what you need from books, clinics, workshops, instructor, friends, family, your horse..... Test out this knowledge to make sure it is correct and it works. Then you will know you know.

K K - Know You Know

By checking know you know you can be sure that what you are doing is correct and works for you and your horse. So if something works well for you and your horse and it is ethical and correct then you are on the right track. If it is not working or doesn't feel right for you then chances are you need to check out this section of your mind map. This is about making sure knowledge isn't flawed or based on assumptions or outdated thinking. Checking our knowledge against new advances in horsemanship is good practice. In turn this may lead you to trying a new or different approach.

Action – Make a point from time to time to check your thinking.

DK K– Don't Know You Know

Have you ever experienced a light bulb moment? Or felt that moment of enlightenment? You suddenly get it and it makes sense and becomes clear. Well you didn't know you know and by your actions you made a discovery.

Action – Open up to your inner self to discovery through trying out new approaches, you need to be self-aware and feel changes. To make the most of this note them down, then they are not lost. Once you are aware you can take steps to learn more about the topic.

DK DK– Don't Know You Don't Know

This is bumping around in the dark. Or for some it is clinging onto beliefs and knowledge that is not helpful, true or correct. Or it is a real tangle of confusion. Or for a few people who live by assumptions this is the area of the map that reflects their thinking. For assumptions are not based on fact or truth. This is the one area of the mind map that is the most challenging to move from.

Action – Be aware of your assumptions and challenge your own thinking.

Exercise - A mind map to check your thinking

Use this template to help you identify what you know and don't know. In turn you will discover what you want to learn and be able to share that information with people who can help you check your knowledge and guide your learning.

	The things you know (K)	The things you don't know (DK)
The things you know (K)	K K	K DK
The things you don't know (DK)	DK K	DK DK