

Have you ever opened one of the fold-out instruction booklets for putting together a piece of furniture and noticed that not only are the instructions often in multiple languages, but have both pictures of what you're supposed to do along with the full text? Have you ever taken distinct notice of which you prefer and which you tend to ignore? Do you use both the text and pictures equally or prefer one over the other to the point that you don't even notice one? This example is sufficient to get us started understanding one of the basic foundations of learning styles—the visual and verbal hypothesis, also known as the verbalizer-visualizer hypothesis.

One of the first places to start when learning about the various learning styles and learning preferences is to understand that there is a general acceptance of the fact that people are often inclined to either learn best visually or verbally. Most people already accept this as truth because they know how they best learn instinctively (without the use of a test or measurement to indicate this learning preference) and understand that others are the opposite and can do without the pictures or text according to learning preference, just as discussed in the opening example. Having a sound understanding of one's visual or verbal preference is a great indicator of the broader learning preferences you're likely to have, however the learning styles tests will be able to offer you more detail and depth in terms of the analysis of your individual learning preferences.

Although academia has created hundreds of distinctions and counter-points on the issue to delineate specific lines between visual learners and others, the basic knowledge that some people learn best by reading while others tend to absorb information far better through the use of pictures. In essence, this distinction between those who learn best through the use of language versus illustrations is called the visualizer-verbalizer hypothesis. It's hard to argue with this hypothesis though, all of us either are or know someone who learns most effectively when presented with pictures whereas others only absorb material when it's been clearly stated in text that can be read and re-read.

General acceptance of the visualizer-verbalizer hypothesis has led to the wide use of multimedia tools that offer a blend of visual and textual information that is presented in a way that attempts to equally stress both pictures and words. This casts a wider net for different learning styles as it integrates the needs of visual learners and others through many forms of information presentation. For those who fall between desiring both visual and verbal cues, multimedia learning tools may be the best solution.

If you never go so far as taking a round of tests to determine your learning style, make sure that next time you go to open and read instructions you make note of what you look to first and most often during the process. Chances are quite good that if you tend to go for the pictures before the text first and repeatedly, you have a visual learning preference. If you ignore the illustrations and prefer to read the instructions, you can bet that you most likely do not have a visual learning preference and may want to explore more about your learning preference by taking tests.