

# VARK Survey Categories

## The VARK Categories

The acronym VARK stands for Visual, Aural, Read/write, and Kinesthetic/[Tactile] sensory modalities that are used for learning information. Fleming and Mills (1992) suggested four categories that seemed to reflect the experiences of the students and teachers. Although there is some overlap between categories, they are defined as follows.

### Visual (V):

This preference includes the depiction of information in maps, spider diagrams, charts, graphs, flow charts, labelled diagrams, and all the symbolic arrows, circles, hierarchies and other devices, that instructors use to represent what could have been presented in words. It could have been called Graphic (G) as that better explains what it covers. It does NOT include movies, videos or PowerPoint. It does include designs, whitespace, patterns, shapes and the different formats that are used to highlight and convey information.

### Aural / Auditory (A):

This perceptual mode describes a preference for information that is "heard or spoken." Students with this modality report that they learn best from lectures, tutorials, tapes, group discussion, email, using mobile phones, speaking, web chat and talking things through. It includes talking out loud as well as talking to yourself. Often people with this preference want to sort things out by speaking, rather than sorting things out and then speaking.

### Read/write (R):

This preference is for information displayed as words. Not surprisingly, many academics have a strong preference for this modality. This preference emphasizes text-based input and output - reading and writing in all its forms. People who prefer this modality are often addicted [or prefer] to PowerPoint, the Internet, lists, filofaxes, dictionaries, thesauri, quotations and words, words, words...

### Kinesthetic (K):

By definition, this modality refers to the "perceptual preference related to the use of experience and practice (simulated or real)." Although such an experience may invoke other modalities, the key is that people who prefer this mode are connected to reality, "either through concrete personal experiences, examples, practice or simulation" [See Fleming & Mills, 1992, pp. 140-141]. It includes demonstrations, simulations, videos and movies of "real" things, as well as case studies, practice and applications. [NOTE: I also think that kinesthetic also includes tactile (touching objects or holding things such as tapping a pencil while thinking or thumbing through flashcards or sipping coffee while studying).]

### What about Mixtures? Multimodals (MM):

Life is multimodal. There are seldom instances where one mode is used, or is sufficient, so we have a four-part VARK profile. That is why the VARK questionnaire gives you four scores. Those who prefer many modes almost equally are of two types. There are those who are context specific who choose a single mode to suit the occasion or situation. There are others who are not satisfied until they have had input (or output) in all of their preferred modes. They take longer to gather information from each mode and, as a result, they often have a deeper and broader understanding.