

Quiz: What is the Best Way for Your Child to Learn?

Find out what kind of learner your child is, plus possible careers and homework helpers that will meet his specific needs

By Linda Rodgers, Parenting

"I can't do it! I can't do it!" Abby Gough would sob each night as she stumbled and skipped her way through her second-grade reading homework. Her mom, Kristen, tried to help, but Abby's frustration would begin after attempting just a few words. Then the Littleton, CO, mom heard about a strategy that sounded worth trying -- she started a journal with her daughter. "I would ask her questions about her day -- 'Who did you sit with at lunch?' or 'What was your favorite thing you did at school?' -- and then leave it in her room with a pen. She'd write me responses and new questions and slip it back on my pillow."

That journal captured Abby's attention and it improved her reading skills. Why? Abby could be described as a "body smart" learner -- someone who absorbs information best when she uses her hands. "Abby is always creating things," her mom notes. "She has a bookshelf in her bedroom devoted to all her inventions."

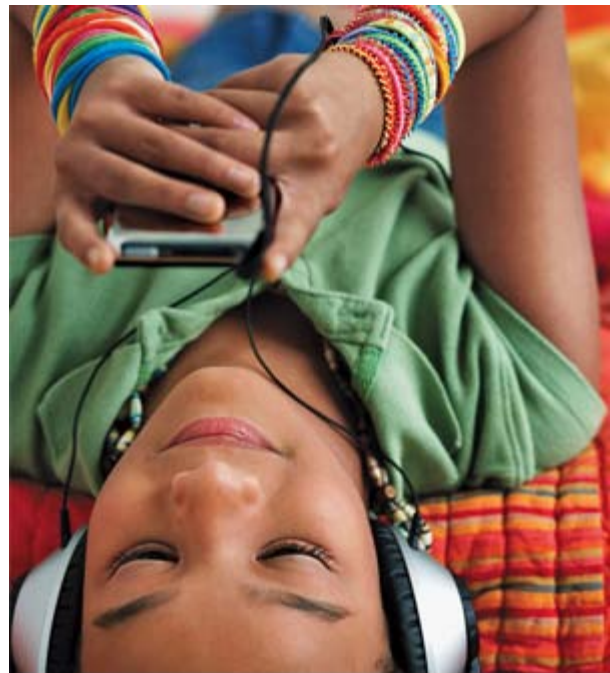
Every kid has at least one dominant learning style, says Kristin Redington Bennett, Ph.D., assistant professor of education at Wake Forest University, in Winston-Salem, NC, and a mom of two. In addition to body smart (known as bodily/kinesthetic), common learning styles include word smart (linguistic/auditory), image smart (visual/spatial), and numbers smart (logical/mathematical). This "theory of multiple intelligences" was first proposed by Harvard professor Howard Gardner, Ph.D., in the 1980s and has become so accepted that today teachers often adapt classroom activities to the different learning styles. For example, a lesson on the Pilgrims might include building a model of the Mayflower, writing a play about the first Thanksgiving, drawing pictures, and making a historical timeline.

► [Could your child have ADHD? Read our Parents' Guide to ADHD to find out](#)

Take our quiz on the following page and find out how your child learns best -- so you can minimize homework battles and advocate for her in the classroom.

1) It's family game night. Your child's likely to pick:

- a. Operation
- b. Scrabble
- c. Pictionary



Masterfile

d. Clue

2) You're about to call your mom, so you tell your child to find something to do. He:

- a. Plays Mario Kart on the Wii
- b. Picks up a book to read
- c. Goes to his room to build something with his Legos
- d. Plays his Scooby-Doo! Case File game on the computer

3) You're going on a road trip to visit your in-laws. Besides the portable DVD player, you pack your child the following activities:

- a. Craft projects
- b. Books and a Mad Libs Jr.
- c. Art supplies and sticker activity books
- d. Travel board games like Battleship and checkers

4) New neighbors moved in, and you took your child to meet them. He's more apt to remember:

- a. That they had a trampoline in the backyard
- b. Their names
- c. Their faces
- d. Questions they asked him

5) Your tween is walking to her new BFF's house for the first time, and she needs to know the way. Besides making sure she takes her cell phone, you:

- a. Walk with her halfway down the block while you tell her how to get there, then point her in the right direction
- b. Write down detailed directions with plenty of landmarks
- c. Draw her a map
- d. Give her the address and tell her which street names to keep an eye out for

6) You're taking your child to the library to pick out a book. He's most likely to gravitate toward:

- a. The audio books
- b. A challenging book above his grade level
- c. The book with the most eye-catching cover
- d. A nonfiction book

7) You want your child to start making his bed. The best way to teach him is to:

- a. Have him do it while you give directions
- b. Write down instructions
- c. Show him how to make it
- d. Break it down into a series of steps

8) After your child's had enough of watching the Disney channel, she's likely to switch to:

- a. Reality-based shows like So You Think You Can Dance
- b. A trivia show like Are You Smarter Than a Fifth Grader?
- c. Cartoons
- d. A science show on the Discovery channel

9) You're at the natural-history museum with your child, and the first place he wants to go is:

- a. The interactive exhibit on large mammals
- b. The exhibit on climate change, which has lots of things to see and read
- c. The IMAX movie
- d. The scavenger hunt

10) Money's tight, so you can only sign your child up for one after-school activity. The one she'd probably like most would be:

- a. A tap dancing or tae kwon do class
- b. A theater class
- c. A photography class
- d. A science club

11) As your child does her homework, you notice she:

- a. Is constantly getting up to get a drink, a snack, or just wander around her room
- b. Likes to come and tell you what she's doing
- c. Seems to daydream a lot
- d. Makes a to-do list first, then tackles her assignments

12) Your child wants your help memorizing his multiplication tables. He's more likely to ask you to:

- a. Use marbles so he can make groupings of numbers
- b. Make up a rap song to help him remember
- c. Quiz him with flash cards
- d. Explain the pattern, then he easily memorizes them

Answer Key:

Body-Smart Learner

If you answered mostly A's: Your child is a body-smart (bodily/kinesthetic) learner -- she probably has a natural sense of balance, making her a good athlete or dancer. These types of kids learn best when it involves their body in some way -- either through hands-on experience (think using objects to count with or blocks for building) or by doing something as they listen, even if it's just chewing gum or kneading a stress ball. Your child is probably also the touchy type; when she has something to tell you, she'll demonstrate it using hand gestures and pantomime, which is why she's likely to be a good actor, too.

Possible Careers: Athlete, dancer, actor, doctor, military, construction, artist, landscape designer

Homework Helpers: •**Let Her Move**• Give your child an exercise ball to sit on as she does her homework -- the sheer act of balancing on it will help her focus better, says Bennett. Or let her do it standing up. Liam McGuerty, 7, often stands at the kitchen table to do his homework so he can wiggle and shift his weight, says his mom, Laurie, of San Diego. •**Take Breaks**• McGuerty doesn't mind if Liam and his sister Molly, 9, another active learner, take a break to play the piano or dance (Molly) or play with Legos (Liam). McGuerty reminds them to get back to work after 15 minutes. •**Get Hands-On**• Want your body-smart kid to remember better? Tell her to move her finger under the words when she's reading books, notes, or spelling words, says educational psychologist Michele Borba, Ed.D. Have her write out spelling words or sums in big letters with chalk on the sidewalk, or on a big piece of paper inside, and hop on them. Or have her spell them out with her body. •**Work It Out**• Whether she's kicking a soccer ball or jumping rope, let your kid go out in the backyard and get her energy out before she settles back down to study.

Word-Smart Learner

If you answered mostly B's: Your child is a verbal or word-smart (linguistic/auditory) learner, and is probably the go-to kid when her pals want to know the lyrics to the latest hit, says Bennett. Linguistic/auditory kids are the most word-driven -- they think in words, like wordplay and puns, and love telling stories. They're also the types of kids who memorize things easily, from dates and spelling words to trivia -- one reason they know all the words to their favorite songs.

Possible Careers: Journalist, teacher, advertising, public relations, screenwriter

Homework Helpers: •**Set It To Music**• If your child is struggling to learn her multiplication tables, encourage her to make up a song about them (or find a tune from Schoolhouse Rock) to help her remember, says Bennett. •**Turn It Into a Story**• Since words are the way these types of kids absorb information best, have her create a short story about the characters when studying for a history test, or make up a word problem to solve a mathematical equation. •**Read It Aloud**• Hearing the words as well as seeing them will help your child remember her notes (and your directions!).

Image-Smart Learner

If you answered mostly C's: You have an image-smart (visual/spatial) learner who thinks in images and pictures. These kids are budding artists and architects; they're good at reading maps, charts, and diagrams, and would rather illustrate a story than write it. They love doing puzzles and tend to focus on visuals rather than dialogue. In fact, if these types of learners watched a cartoon in a foreign language without subtitles, they'd probably get just as much out of it as if it were in English.

Possible Careers: Artist, graphic designer, architect, photographer, filmmaker, engineer

Homework Helpers: •**Say It In Colors**• Remember those highlighters you used in college? Well, buy some -- and markers, too -- in a variety of colors, and then have your visual kid write out or highlight his notes in different colors, says Borba. •**Draw It Out**• Turning abstract concepts into visual objects also helps these kids absorb information better. When her daughter Chelsea, 12, is stuck on a

writing assignment, Meryl Rader of Westfield, NJ, has her sketch it out first and then write a description of her drawings. Or use play dough to form spelling words or math problems. • turn him into a shutterbug Is your child having trouble with geometry? Give him a camera and tell him to photograph all the right angles in the house.

Numbers-Smart Learner

If you answered mostly D's: Your child is a numbers/reasoning-smart (logical/mathematical) learner, a big-picture kid who enjoys arguing a point (think of him as a little lawyer) and is constantly asking questions, often of a cosmic nature, says Bennett. Logical learners are quick to recognize patterns, like to group objects and concepts together, and can do math equations in their head. Your child is probably also good at figuring things out on his own, which also makes him good at science and experiments (as well as taking stuff apart to see how it works).

Possible Careers: Scientist, mathematician, lawyer, economist, engineer, computer programmer

Homework Helpers • Give Him Game • When spelling's a problem, pull out a word puzzle. Computer games will also help him learn to read, spell, and memorize facts. **• Help Him See the Big Picture •** Details are secondary to logical learners, so when you're helping him study for a science test, ask him the cosmic questions first ("What is the solar system?"), and then ask for details later ("What are the names of the planets?"). You can also quiz him this way when you're reading together -- ask him about the plot or setting of the story first, then ask him about the characters. **• Break It Down •** Logical learners do best when they're able to put things into groups. So if your child's trying to write a book report, have him come up with an outline or list first.

Linda Rodgers, former senior articles editor at Parenting, just discovered her daughter is a visual learner.

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