

Activists

Activists learn best from activities in which there are:

- new experiences and challenges from which to learn
- short 'here and now' tasks involving competitive teamwork and problem-solving
- excitement, change and variety
- 'high visibility' tasks such as chairing meetings, leading discussions and presentations
- situations in which new ideas can be developed without constraints of policy and structure
- opportunities for just 'having a go'.

Activists learn least from, and may react against, activities where:

- they have a passive role (lectures, instructions, reading)
- they are observers
- they are required to assimilate, analyse and interpret lots of 'messy' data
- they must work in a solitary way (reading and writing alone)
- statements are 'theoretical' - an explanation of cause
- there is considerable repetition (practising the same skill)
- there are precise instructions with little room for manoeuvre
- they must be thorough, and tie up loose ends.

Reflectors

Reflectors learn best from activities where they:

- are allowed or encouraged to watch / think / ponder on activities
- have time to think before acting, to assimilate before commenting
- can carry out careful, detailed research
- have time to review their learning
- need to produce carefully considered analyses and reports
- are helped to exchange views with other people without danger, by prior agreement, within a structured learning experience
- can reach a decision without pressure and tight deadlines.

Reflectors learn least from, and may react against, activities where:

- they feel 'forced' into the limelight
- they must act without time for planning
- they are asked for an instant reaction, or 'off the cuff' thoughts
- they are given insufficient data on which to base a conclusion
- in the interests of expediency, they have to make short cuts or do a superficial job.

Theorists

Theorists learn best from activities where:

- what is being offered is part of a system, model, concept or theory
- they can explore methodically the associations and interrelationships between ideas, events and situations
- they can question and probe the basic methodology, assumptions or logic
- they are intellectually stretched, e.g. by being asked to analyse and evaluate, then

- generalise
- they are in structured situations with a clear purpose
- they see interesting ideas and concepts, whether or not they are immediately relevant.

Theorists learn least from, and may react against, activities where they:

- have no apparent context or purpose
- have to participate in situations emphasising emotions and feelings
- are involved in unstructured activities where ambiguity and uncertainty are high
- are asked to act or decide without a basis in policy, principle or concept
- are faced with a hotchpotch of alternative or contradictory techniques or methods without exploring any in depth
- doubt that the subject matter is methodologically sound
- feel out of tune with other participants, for example when they are with lots of activists.

Pragmatists

Pragmatists learn best from activities where:

- there is an obvious link between the subject matter and a 'real life' problem
- they are shown techniques for doing things with obvious practical advantages
- they have the chance to try out and practise techniques with coaching or feedback from a credible expert
- they see a model they can emulate, or examples / anecdotes
- they are given techniques currently applicable to their own work
- they are given immediate opportunities to implement what they have learned
- they can concentrate on practical issues, such as drawing up action plans or giving tips to others.

Pragmatists learn least from, and may react against, activities where:

- the learning is not related to an immediate need they recognise
- organisers of the learning seem distant from reality
- there are no clear guidelines
- they feel people are going round in circles rather than getting to the point
- there are political, organisational, managerial or personal obstacles to implementation
- there is no apparent reward from the learning activity, for example higher grades!