Learning Preferences in the Abbey Distance Program

Everyone has their own preferences for collecting and organizing information into useful knowledge, and the online environment can be particularly well suited to many learning approaches and personality needs. Research suggests that learners best retain different types of information when delivered through various methods.

Examples of learning preferences include:

- Abstract
- Active
- Analytic
- Auditory
- Concrete
- Dynamic
- Global
- Intuitive
- Kinesthetic
- Logical
- Physical
- Reflective
- Sensing
- Sequential
- Social
- Solitary
- Spatial
- Verbal
- Visual

Most learners use a combination of many of these learning modalities to be successful.
To get the most out of online learning, make sure you develop new knowledge and skills in a way that you can retain, apply, and adapt to new contexts. It is vital that online learners take time to reflect on how they learn best:

- Before starting your online class, think about where, how, and when you accomplish your best academic work. Are you a morning person or a night owl? Do you prefer to work with music or silence? Do you like studying a little bit every day or working for a long stretch all at once? If you had the choice, would you prefer to learn a new topic by discussing it, reading it, listening to a podcast, watching a video, or creating a project or game about it? Does it help you to brainstorm ideas with others or spending time thinking alone? If you are not sure, try different learning and studying methods to discover what works best for you.

- Take advantage of the established learning science principles of practice, application, and reflection. To ensure your newly discovered knowledge and skills stick with you, it’s important to repeatedly practice skills, apply knowledge in different contexts, and reflect on what you have learned, especially as you practice and apply in new settings. A well-designed learning experience will provide you with opportunities to practice, apply, and reflect. Still, you can reinforce your learning outside of a class by connecting it to your everyday life and work.

- Video strategies: For recorded video, pause and write a brief summary of what you have heard in notes every few minutes. For live video, especially if the video is available to watch later, avoid taking notes. Pay attention to what you are hearing and participate in the discussion to help keep your focus. Raise your virtual hand or ask a question in the chat.

- Take advantage break-out groups: If offered, these live, small group discussions will give you a chance to hear other perspectives or review challenging material as a group.

- Adapt the course content to your own preferences. For example, if you’re a visual learner, print out transcripts of the video lectures to review. Learn best by listening? Make sure to build time into your schedule to play and replay all audio- and video-based course content. Also, consider asking your instructor if they can share additional or alternative resources for course content.

To discover more about your learning preferences, take this free learning styles quiz: https://www.webtools.ncsu.edu/learningstyles/

Some ideas adapted from the University of Illinois