



Wee Learn



Wee Builders(3 - 4 years): What's Your Child's Learning Style?

What makes a child gifted and talented may not always be good grades in school but a different way of looking at the world and learning. All children learn and communicate differently.

As parents, we want to nurture all the talented qualities within our children. We want them to learn, grow and thrive. Your initial reaction is probably, "Yes, but how do I do that?" Identifying your child's learning style can help a great deal.

There are three major learning styles. In the explanations below, we'll use the example of taking your child to the park to determine the learning style he or she might prefer.

Visual Learning. When your child goes to the park, does he/she prefer to read a book under a tree or watch the birds fly overhead? If so, your child might be a visual learner. Simply put: Visual learners absorb what they see.

Auditory Learning. While at the park, if your child chooses to engage in conversations with other children or would rather listen to an audiobook, they may be an auditory learner. Auditory learning is a learning style in which a child learns through what she hears.

Kinesthetic Learning. When your child gets to the park, does he/she run to the playground to build sandcastles or do they join a soccer game? If so, your child may be a kinesthetic learner. Kinesthetic learning is a style in which a child learns through what she does.

While creating these categories is no doubt helpful, it can also give parents the illusion that their children must fit into one of the three categories. However, a child's learning process doesn't just encompass one learning style, rather children use each learning style to different degrees. Therefore, when parents focus on incorporating all three learning styles rather than focusing on one, they have a deeper impact on their child's learning.

Take the zoo, for example: Kids love zoos because they provide an environment that incorporates all the learning styles — hearing, seeing and doing. Children can listen to the zookeeper talk about the lizards, see the lizards and even touch the lizards' scales. All of these contribute to a holistic learning environment.

Foster Learning and Growth. Now that you've identified your child's learning style, you can learn about methods of communicating with her more effectively. Here are three examples of how to effectively communicate with visual, auditory and kinesthetic learners.

Teach through examples. Children are essentially walking sponges — everything you do (or don't do) is saved in their memory banks and referenced all the time. If you want your visual learner to be receptive to differing perspectives of the world, then teach through example.

If you are teaching a visual learner how rockets work, for example, the best way to communicate the intricacies of this process is by showing her a YouTube video of a rocket taking off or a step-by-step visual guide showing what happens when a rocket launches into space.

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Never assume you know more than your child. The best way to communicate with an auditory learner is through dialogue. However, this involves a certain level of open-mindedness. Be open to the idea that your child can teach you something; otherwise, it squelches two-way communication and instead becomes a lecture.

Auditory learners benefit from hearing information from these conversations. So, consider the rocket again, the best way to explain a launch would be to have an open discussion about rockets or hear an expert describe how rockets operate.

Let your child make mistakes. Kinesthetic learners may have issues with reading or listening because they learn best by doing. These learners benefit the most from being allowed to learn by trial and error through activities.

When teaching a kinesthetic learner about rockets, allowing them to build a model rocket would be a more effective way to engage this learner than resorting to a video or lecture. Encourage adventure, and never belittle or shame your child when she doesn't know something or makes a mistake. You want to foster learning and growth, and that means you should encourage mistakes.

Additional factors that can affect effective communication with all three types of learners are gender, environment, and your child's motives.

Girls and boys communicate differently, so understanding how to communicate with both is important. The best learning environments for children are environments that are clean and safe. And lastly, understanding your child's motives will give you greater insight into how to effectively communicate with her, which equates to greater learning.

As you communicate more effectively, you will foster an environment that's conducive to both learning and growth. Try to learn more about what motivates your child to grow and learn — you never know what gifts you'll unearth when you create a positive learning environment.

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