

The Facilitating Tutor

Facilitating the Independent Learner

September 5, 2010



Learning Styles and Thinking Styles: Coordinating Sensory Input and Cognitive Strategies

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Penn State - York

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Most teachers and tutors are familiar with preferred “learning styles” but have you also considered individual “thinking styles”? There is a distinction between how we prefer information to be presented to us, our learning style, and how we manipulate and use the information, our thinking style. We need to keep in mind that most students not only have a preference for certain types of sensory input but they also tend to use specific strategies and thought processes as they manipulate that input as they learn. Learning styles generally refer to the types of sensory input. Thinking styles reflect what happens, cognitively and neurologically, to that input as we process it for the purpose of learning.

Learning style preferences and thinking preferences merge as we process the steady stream of information to which our senses are exposed. Whether in a classroom, on the job, or engaged in social activities, our response to the environment is dependent on the incoming sensory stimulation and the way that we perceive, process, and think about the input. This article addresses student preferences for how they receive information and how their thinking styles impact their learning.

Our Preferred Thinking Style

Before you read further, consider this: Are you a big picture person? Or, are you more of a detail person? That is, are you a top down learner, preferring to start with the main idea and then work your way down to the specific details? Or, are you a bottom up learner who likes to begin with the more factual and detailed information, working your way up to the big picture?

The type of sensory input (visual, auditory, tactile, etc) to which one is exposed, in combination with the content of the input, impact our ability to effectively process it. The content, depending on the depth of information, can range from precise presentation of facts and data to broad, abstract concepts. The sensory

input in a classroom or tutoring session tends to be visual and auditory, sometimes tactile, and often some combination of these. Although there is a variety ways to categorize one’s approach to “thinking”, our strategies often begin with a

- ⊗ **top down/big picture approach that eventually leads to the supporting details or**
- ⊗ **the bottom up/detail focus which gradually leads to the big picture.**

When we consciously select the sensory input that we want to attend to, we begin processing the information. The first step requires attention and concentration. The information moves through the sensory register, into short term memory, is manipulated and rehearsed in our working memory, and then continues into long term memory where it can be permanently stored, resulting in learning.

Two Complementary Approaches: Inductive and Deductive Reasoning

Inductive reasoning is the process of moving from the specific to the general; that is, starting with pieces of data or details and gradually building an understanding of concepts and the broader picture. Students and tutees who prefer to use inductive reasoning tend to be bottom-up learners and thinkers. They start with the specific, factual, and detail based building blocks, combine and synthesize these, and gradually work their way up to the main idea or over arching concept. Inductive reasoning allows us to make general assumptions based on specific examples or experiences.

The opposite approach, **deductive reasoning**, is a way of thinking that relates two or more general concepts or conditions to a specific case. Using this mode of thinking, the student will be oriented first to the major concept or “big picture”. Then comes a gradual exploration of

(Continued on page 2)

the idea in relation to the specific facts and related supporting material. Students and tutees who tend to be the top-down learners prefer to start with the big picture/main idea, follow with the important supporting details, and conclude with a specific example.

amount of factual information in their classes, most of which is transmitted to them via direct instruction. The teachers are sharing information, much of it being discrete and detailed, and the students are expected to attend to the lecture, perhaps supplemented by discussion, and absorb what they hear. It



Critical Thinking – A Practical Perspective

I am using the term critical thinking to refer to the ability to think independently, to ask logical questions, and to make sound and rational decisions. Critical thinking is the ability to think for oneself and to use reliable problem solving skills to reach independent conclusions. Application of critical thinking in the classroom involves far more than memorizing isolated facts and data; it requires analysis, synthesis and evaluation of information. Many students struggle to become effective college level critical thinkers.

It is the position of this writer that critical thinking is a natural step in the cognitive hierarchy if prior and effective inductive or deductive reasoning skills have already been acquired. When a student has been taught effective reasoning skills, whether based primarily on inductive or deductive reasoning, the foundation for use of logic has begun to develop. It is the need for logical, systematic, and rational thinking that precedes the ability to use effective critical thinking skills. The point is that it is the organization and systematic processing of available information that allows one to apply logic and critical thinking strategies. These are necessary skills for college success, but are students equipped with effective critical thinking skills as they arrive on a college campus? Many are not.

Consider typical high school students and their general level of reasoning skills. They are exposed to a significant

amount of factual information in their classes, most of which is transmitted to them via direct instruction. The teachers are sharing information, much of it being discrete and detailed, and the students are expected to attend to the lecture, perhaps supplemented by discussion, and absorb what they hear. It appears that there is an ever increasing emphasis in our public schools, particularly with the focus on standardized testing, to teach facts that are often directly related standardized tests. This is the “what” part of learning for these students; information that is transmitted directly to them. But how much thinking and use of that information is actually required? In some cases, there is very little critical thinking that has been expected of high school students.

As noted above, most of us have a preferred learning style but many students are not yet aware of their preference. We probably also have a preferred thinking style although even fewer students appear consciously aware of that. Our learning style and thinking style are used in tandem as we listen, study and learn. A student might have a strong learning style preference for visual input and also tend to be a top-down/deductive thinker. Or, another student might have a strong learning preference for tactile activities and also have a bottom-up/inductive thinking style. It is likely that at least part of our preference is neurologically hard wired but our preferences might also have been learned via exposure to direct teaching scenarios, or role models, or via observational experiences. I am a strong advocate for multisensory learning: combining multiple modes of sensory input to increase attention and concentration, leading to more efficient processing and learning. To actively process multiple modes of input increases the likelihood that it will be stored in memory.

Keep in mind that if we are not paying attention and are not actively and cognitively engaged, then the likelihood that we will process textbook or lecture information is dramatically reduced. However, the specific learning situation typically dictates the type and quantity of sensory input, thereby modifying our preferences by virtue of what is available to us via our immediate environment. One might prefer to process visually or via a hands-on mode but if the situation is one in which there is only auditory information, then we are forced to make use of that source of stimulation. Preference or not, we need to adapt to what the environment provides.

Applying Awareness of One's Thinking to Learning

When we say that we want students to become better thinkers, what are we asking of them? For some, better thinking involves being able to organize and articulate one's thoughts. To that, we might add the skill of supporting one's opinion or positions based on use of valid information. For others, becoming a better thinker means that they understand that there is a significant difference between rationalization and reason and that they recognize the importance of continually questioning one's personal views. For many students, becoming a better thinker enables them to become more effective critical thinkers, transferring and applying what they learn to new problem solving scenarios. Does familiarity with learning styles and cognitive processing make learning more effective? I think it does. Once familiar with these concepts, students can acquire and strengthen their skills via practice and application.

Is it important for tutors and tutees to be familiar with learning styles and types of cognitive processing? I believe it is. Many students and tutors have never had to really consider their own cognitive style, yet in college they are expected to demonstrate and apply both inductive and deductive reasoning skills. Many are not familiar with metacognitive strategies and how to self regulate their learning. But they gradually recognize how those skills can lead to academic

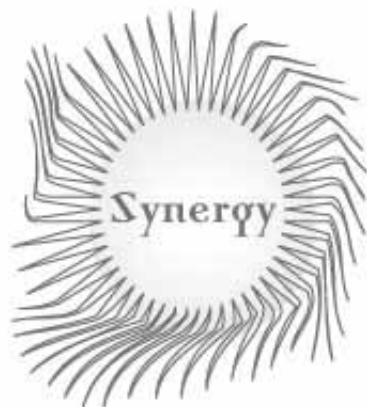
and career success and they can share this information with their tutees. By virtue of increasing students' awareness of metacognition, their own thinking styles, and specific strategies that work for them, more effective learning will occur.

Summary

Although it is important for tutors and tutees to be aware of both individual learning styles and thinking styles, their significance is magnified when they are considered in combination. For example, it is worthwhile for a student to try and maximize the opportunity to process information via their preferred input mode, whether visual, auditory, tactile, or kinesthetic. Likewise, it is important to be conscious of one's thinking style, whether top down/deductive or bottom up/inductive mode. It is the position of this writer that when the preferred learning style and the preferred mode of thinking are *consciously* used in tandem that information processing will be most effective. Our tutors are encouraged to use one approach for the actual tutoring and then to review and end the session using the alternative approach. For example, use a top down strategy as a concept is broken down into its components, but then conclude the session using a bottom up approach, reviewing the details and working their way back up to the big picture. Knowing *how* to think and to effectively approach and process information will increase the likelihood that the material will be remembered, generalized, and transferred to a new or similar situation. That is clear evidence that learning has actually occurred.

For a copy of the complete article and references please contact Cora M. Dzubak at CMD14@psu.edu. More articles by Dr. Cora Dzubak may be found in the ATP's online journal, *Synergy*. Dr. Dzubak is the co-author with Mr. Jim Valkenburg of the *Engaged Mind* found at <https://www.createspace.com/3411731>.

Synergy



Synergy is a biannual, peer-reviewed online periodical published by The Association for the Tutoring Profession.

- Applied Research and Assessment: Evidence related to the extent, effectiveness, and/or impact of tutoring use in educational and professional settings
- Practice: Reports on innovative uses of tutoring in specific environments, with notable results
- Development: Advance information on the newest tutoring projects, programs, tools, and trends
- Commentary: Critical reflections on the changing nature of tutoring, learning, and training tutors

<http://www.myatp.org/ejournal.htm>

A Training Guide for College Tutors and Peer Educators

By Sally A. Lipsky

Publisher: Pearson Education, Inc. ©2011

Reviewed by Arden B. Hamer

A Training Guide for College Tutors and Peer Educators is a great resource for supervisors wanting solid, research-based instruction for training staff members working in one-on-one and group tutoring or course-based situations, such as with Supplemental Instruction. This text is designed to be used in a range of training settings, be it a credit-bearing course, workshops, self-paced, or online.

Each chapter models the flow of a tutorial session beginning with a focusing activity and concluding with an activity to assess learning and summarize the topic. The text covers the topics of the role of the peer educator, how learning occurs, tutoring as a proactive process, active and collaborative learning, organizing a group, critical thinking and questioning skills, assessing student learning, communication and listening skills, diversity, and online assistance. Content is presented in a concise, engaging, and comfortable style which should appeal to readers. Prospective tutors/peer educators will discover that the information is pertinent to their own learning. I feel that the tutor trainers should benefit as much from chapter activities as will the students with whom they will be working.

Chapters contain numerous activities that can be completed individually or in groups, depending upon the set-up of your training course or workshop. The exercises reinforce content and help readers apply information to their future tutorial positions. For example, the chapter titled "Incorporating Critical Thinking and Questioning Skills" includes a conversation between a tutor and student working on understanding Pavlov's experiment in Classical Conditioning. Readers are directed to evaluate the tutor's performance and then rewrite the script so that the tutor encourages the student to think more critically and, ultimately, become more independent in his or her learning. The activity

"Moving students from a simple review toward a deeper level of understanding and application of content" is characteristic of how the author portrays the tutorial role and effective tutor/student interaction.

Furthermore, the text emphasizes the importance of integrating learning and study strategies in tutorial sessions. Strategies, such as predicting, note taking, graphic organizers, and test preparation, are interwoven within each chapter. Readers assess and practice these strategies in order to be prepared to introduce and model a range of learning/study methods when working with students.

Also, interspersed throughout chapters are typical scenarios and real-life advice from experienced tutors/peer educators, which provide valuable opportunities for the prospective tutors to reflect upon and discuss situations that they likely will encounter in their positions.

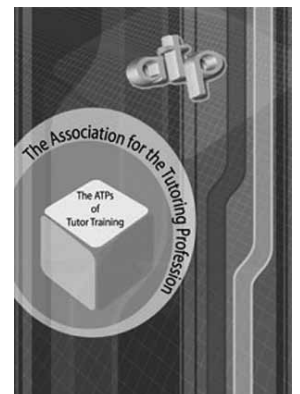
If you are applying for CRLA's International Tutor Program Certification or certification through NADE's Course-based Learning Assistance or Tutoring Services, note that the Instructor's Manual includes a section with suggestions for how the text materials can relate to certification requirements. Also included in the Instructor's Manual are a course syllabus, topical outlines, sample job materials (descriptions, application, recommendation form), and assessment surveys/tools. If you have an online or self-paced training experience, the author provides chapter instructions that you can copy and distribute.

In conclusion, with this text instructors will welcome a comprehensive training guide that is flexible and easy to implement, and with helpful supplementary materials. Readers will welcome the thought-provoking content presented in an interactive format and which is immediately useful in their work as a tutor.

Note: The ATP does not wish to promote commercial books. This review is offered as a opinion by a colleague.

The *atps Of Tutor Training* is available.

Please visit the ATP website <http://www.myatp.org>.





Tutoring: Helping Wishes Come True

March 27th - 30th, 2011 Conference Proposal Form

(Deadline for Proposal Submission: January 8, 2010 no exceptions)



Presenter's Information

Primary presenter name and title _____

Institution _____

Work address _____

Phone _____ Fax _____

Email _____

Other presenters' names, titles and institutions:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Presentation Information

1. Session Title: _____

2. Intended audience (check all that apply):

Tutors Directors Administrators Tutor coordinators College-Level Tutoring K-12 Remediation Special Needs Tutoring

3. Format & Time Needed*:

- Presentation
- Demonstrations
- Workshop
- Panel discussion
- Poster Session

*All breakout/concurrent sessions, at this conference will be scheduled for 50 minute intervals. There will be no extended sessions. However, you may request two 50 minute sessions (a part I and II of the same topic) with a 10 minute break between sessions. Please only make this selection if you have content that will fill up 1 hour and 40 minutes with a break in the middle.

4. Session Description: Please include intended audience (tutor trainers, tutors, program administrators, etc.), and limit your description to 50 words. If your presentation is accepted, your description will appear in the conference program book.

5. Summary: Include a one-page summary which states the presentation's purpose, outline of content, significance to the field of tutoring, relevance for participants, and specific plans to engage the audience.

6. Equipment provided: All meeting rooms will have a screen, LCD projector and flipcharts. If you need any other equipment, you will be responsible for arrangements and costs. All presenters will need to bring their own laptop computers if they plan to project their presentation on the LCD projector. NOTE: Internet will NOT be provided in any meeting room. Please save any websites to your laptop.

If you have additional questions or concerns about presentation, you may contact Tracey Williams at twil@tjc.edu

Please see the website page to download a RTF document that you can type your proposal.

Let's Get Ready for Orlando Magic 2011



Tutoring: Helping Wishes Come True

March 27th - 31st, 2011

Disney World Orlando, Florida



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Affiliation _____

Address _____

City _____

State/Province _____ Postal Code _____

E-Mail Address _____

Are you including ATP Membership? If yes, please go to <http://www.myatp.org/join.htm> and complete the membership application. When you send a membership application along with your registration form and payment, you may register for any conference workshop at the member rate.

If you are an ATP member and in need of reasonable accommodations for the 2010 conference, please notify Ms. Marla Owens in writing no later than February 1, 2011. Accommodations cannot be assigned or provided after this date.

The ATP will not give, sell, trade, rent, or in any other way pass along your information to outside publications or organizations for any purpose with the single exception that membership information may be shared among sister organizations within the ACDEA.

Conference fees

| Please circle all items that your registration applies. | Member | Non-member | Student* |
|--|----------|------------|----------|
| Full Conference Registration | \$200.00 | \$250.00 | \$175.00 |
| Single day advance Registration | \$200.00 | \$250.00 | \$125.00 |
| Pre-conference—ATP Tutor Training Workshop March 28 (Comprehensive)- All Day) | \$125.00 | \$125.00 | \$125.00 |
| Pre-conference—ATP Tutor Training Workshop March 28 (half day) Morning or Afternoon (please circle one) | \$75.00 | \$75.00 | \$75.00 |
| Pre Conference—CLADEA Leadership Training | \$75.00 | \$100.00 | \$50.00 |
| Pre conference—NCLCA | FREE | FREE | FREE |
| ATP Membership 2011-2012 | \$30.00 | \$30.00 | \$30.00 |
| Brunch March 30, 2011 | \$50.00 | \$50.00 | \$50.00 |

Total _____

Meal Tickets for Non-Conference Attendees

The ATP recognizes that Orlando is a great place for family and friends. If you want your guest to share one of the conference meals, the conference planners needs to order the additional meals. Please indicate below the meal and the number of guests that you wish to join in the meal. The cost of each meal is \$50.00.

| | | |
|---|----------------------------------|-------------|
| Monday Breakfast March 28,2011 | _____ Number of guests @ \$50.00 | Total _____ |
| Awards Luncheon March 28,2011 | _____ Number of guests @ \$50.00 | Total _____ |
| Keynote/ Fellows Induction Luncheon March 29,2011 | _____ Number of guests @ \$50.00 | Total _____ |
| Wednesday Brunch March 30,2011 | _____ Number of guests @ \$50.00 | Total _____ |

Grand Total _____



The ATP Conference in New Orleans was a huge success! Thanks to all who presented and participated in the conference. Without great ATP members, it would not be possible to conduct such an outstanding program. It is time to submit a proposal for next year's conference in Orlando. It is easy, just reflect upon the training techniques you use with your tutors, and share your successful (and maybe those that did not show a successful outcome) strategies with others at the conference. Ms. Tracey Williams, the ATP Vice-President, will be happy to accept proposals for the Orlando conference. Ms. Marla Owens, ATP President-Elect, is already working to organize some interesting events to magically enhance the conference, I hope that you will begin planning now to attend.

This summer the Elected Board members met in Seattle to site-visit hotels for the 2012 ATP Conference. While there, the entire ATP Executive Board had a virtual board meeting to plan for the year ahead. Each member of ATP Executive Board provided an updating of the committee goals and budgetary needs.

The ATP offers thanks to Ms. Deborah Hardwick, who conducted the online basic tutoring technique workshop this summer. Those that attended reported that it was a great opportunity to gain some professional development for administrators, as well as, to help tutors get in training hours for certification. This fall the ATP has plans to conduct live webinars. Please look for those to be posted on the website by September 15.

Mr. Mike McLeod, ATP Membership Chair, will be conducting a membership drive this fall. Please encourage your colleagues to join ATP during this special ATP membership offering. If your institution has a large number of tutors, it may benefit you to have an institutional membership to ATP. Watch for more details on the website about the membership drive in the next few weeks.

EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION!

While the registration fee will be increased this year due to the costs of the food, but we have a special for those Early-Bird Registrants! If you register before the Early Bird deadline, November 15, you can take advantage of this fabulous discount.

The ATP is planning to host a tutor training workshop again as a pre-conference at our annual conference. So make sure you plan to be in Orlando on March 27. The tutor training workshop was a huge hit last year in New Orleans. So many signed up that we could not accommodate everyone who wanted to attend. Please sign up early. The ATP wants to build on that success, and make it even better this year.

I welcome suggestions for how the ATP can improve services to members. Contact me by e-mail, Jennifer.Hurd@cengage.com with any suggestions you have of how we can do this. This is part of our mission as the ATP is member driven in all it does

Conference Awards

The Association for the Tutoring Profession Executive Board has approved the creation of two research awards with a value of \$500 each. Proposals will be reviewed by the Awards Committee. Winners will be required to present their findings at next year's conference and publish those findings in Synergy, the ATP Online Journal. Research proposals must address some aspect of tutoring. Winners must attend the 7th Conference of the ATP in Orlando, Florida to receive the award. Please see http://www.myatp.org/Award_guidelines.htm for more details.

Dr. John Gardner Keynote Speaker at the 2011 ATP Conference

My Latest Crusade, the Quest for a Design for Excellence in the First Year of College: Tutoring as a "Foundational Dimension"

John Gardner, <http://www.jngi.org/> will provide us with a message about the need for us to get involved in the national movement to create plans for excellence in the first year, which are or will be, in development on many college campuses. Tutoring professionals must have a piece of this exciting action!





The Association for the Tutoring Profession
Facilitating Tutor Newsletter
Mike Zenanko, Editor,
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104 Ramona Wood Hall
Jacksonville, AL 36265-1602

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

A large, stylized illustration of a teapot, reminiscent of the Genie's teapot from Disney's Aladdin. The teapot is rendered in a light gray, semi-transparent style with a glowing effect. It has a curved spout on the left and a handle on the right. The background behind the teapot is a dark gray gradient with faint, swirling patterns. The title text is overlaid on the teapot's body.

Tutoring: Helping Wishes Come True



**March 27-30, 2011
Disney World
Orlando, Florida**

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<http://www.myatp.org>