The VARK Questionnaire (Version 7.8)

How Do I Learn Best?

Choose the answer which best explains your preference and circle the letter(s) next to it. 

Please circle more than one if a single answer does not match your perception.

Leave blank any question that does not apply.

1. You are helping someone who wants to go to your airport, the center of town or railway station. You would:
   a. go with her.
   b. tell her the directions.
   c. write down the directions.
   d. draw, or show her a map, or give her a map.

2. A website has a video showing how to make a special graph. There is a person speaking, some lists and words describing what to do and some diagrams. You would learn most from:
   a. seeing the diagrams.
   b. listening.
   c. reading the words.
   d. watching the actions.

3. You are planning a vacation for a group. You want some feedback from them about the plan. You would:
   a. describe some of the highlights they will experience.
   b. use a map to show them the places.
   c. give them a copy of the printed itinerary.
   d. phone, text or email them.

4. You are going to cook something as a special treat. You would:
   a. cook something you know without the need for instructions.
   b. ask friends for suggestions.
   c. look on the Internet or in some cookbooks for ideas from the pictures.
   d. use a good recipe.

5. A group of tourists want to learn about the parks or wildlife reserves in your area. You would:
   a. talk about, or arrange a talk for them about parks or wildlife reserves.
   b. show them maps and internet pictures.
   c. take them to a park or wildlife reserve and walk with them.
   d. give them a book or pamphlets about the parks or wildlife reserves.

6. You are about to purchase a digital camera or mobile phone. Other than price, what would most influence your decision?
   a. Trying or testing it.
   b. Reading the details or checking its features online.
   c. It is a modern design and looks good.
   d. The salesperson telling me about its features.

7. Remember a time when you learned how to do something new. Avoid choosing a physical skill, eg. riding a bike. You learned best by:
   a. watching a demonstration.
   b. listening to somebody explaining it and asking questions.
   c. diagrams, maps, and charts - visual clues.
   d. written instructions – e.g. a manual or book.
8. You have a problem with your heart. You would prefer that the doctor:
   a. gave you a something to read to explain what was wrong.
   b. used a plastic model to show what was wrong.
   c. described what was wrong.
   d. showed you a diagram of what was wrong.

9. You want to learn a new program, skill or game on a computer. You would:
   a. read the written instructions that came with the program.
   b. talk with people who know about the program.
   c. use the controls or keyboard.
   d. follow the diagrams in the book that came with it.

10. I like websites that have:
    a. things I can click on, shift or try.
    b. interesting design and visual features.
    c. interesting written descriptions, lists and explanations.
    d. audio channels where I can hear music, radio programs or interviews.

11. Other than price, what would most influence your decision to buy a new non-fiction book?
    a. The way it looks is appealing.
    b. Quickly reading parts of it.
    c. A friend talks about it and recommends it.
    d. It has real-life stories, experiences and examples.

12. You are using a book, CD or website to learn how to take photos with your new digital camera. You would like to have:
    a. a chance to ask questions and talk about the camera and its features.
    b. clear written instructions with lists and bullet points about what to do.
    c. diagrams showing the camera and what each part does.
    d. many examples of good and poor photos and how to improve them.

13. Do you prefer a teacher or a presenter who uses:
    a. demonstrations, models or practical sessions.
    b. question and answer, talk, group discussion, or guest speakers.
    c. handouts, books, or readings.
    d. diagrams, charts or graphs.

14. You have finished a competition or test and would like some feedback. You would like to have feedback:
    a. using examples from what you have done.
    b. using a written description of your results.
    c. from somebody who talks it through with you.
    d. using graphs showing what you had achieved.

15. You are going to choose food at a restaurant or cafe. You would:
    a. choose something that you have had there before.
    b. listen to the waiter or ask friends to recommend choices.
    c. choose from the descriptions in the menu.
    d. look at what others are eating or look at pictures of each dish.

16. You have to make an important speech at a conference or special occasion. You would:
    a. make diagrams or get graphs to help explain things.
    b. write a few key words and practice saying your speech over and over.
    c. write out your speech and learn from reading it over several times.
    d. gather many examples and stories to make the talk real and practical.
The VARK Questionnaire Scoring Chart

Use the following scoring chart to find the VARK category that each of your answers corresponds to. Circle the letters that correspond to your answers.

e.g. If you answered b and c for question 3, circle V and R in the question 3 row.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>a category</th>
<th>b category</th>
<th>c category</th>
<th>d category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>A</td>
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Scoring Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>a category</th>
<th>b category</th>
<th>c category</th>
<th>d category</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>K</td>
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<td>V</td>
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<td>V</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>K</td>
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<td>A</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>V</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>K</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Calculating your scores

Count the number of each of the VARK letters you have circled to get your score for each VARK category.

Total number of **V**s circled = 
Total number of **A**s circled = 
Total number of **R**s circled = 
Total number of **K**s circled =  

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Why do we give talks?

Why do we attend talks?

Who is our audience?
Organization of a Presentation

Adapted from St. James and Spiro, pp. 161-162

**What?**
1. What is your subject? My subject is __________________________.
2. What is your title? My title is ____________________________.

**Why?**
3. Why are you giving this presentation?
   I am giving this presentation because ____________________________.
4. What is your purpose? My purpose is to ____________________________.
5. Is this a “Know this” presentation (to inform or educate)? A “Do this” presentation (to persuade, convince, motivate, or provoke)? Both?

**Who?**
6. Who is your audience? My audience is ____________________________.
7. How many people will attend your presentation?
8. Where do they come from?
   a. your department  d. around the country
   b. your specialty  e. around the world
   c. your hospital/university  f. lay people
9. Why are they attending?
   a. they were required to come
   b. CME credits
   c. They need the information to take a test or do their jobs
   d. interest in the subject or curiosity
10. How many in the audience are familiar with the subject?
   a. most  b. about half  c. few
11. How many in the audience equal or surpass your expertise on the subject?
   a. most  b. about half  c. few  d. none
12. Why do you think they need this information?
   a. direct contact with them
   b. what others say about them
   c. general information about their interests and needs
13. Will they have difficulty understanding you?
   a. too much jargon
   b. too many acronyms or abbreviations
   c. references to methods, diseases etc. that are unclear
   d. language, accent or dialect differences
14. Will your talk have more information than the audience needs to hear?
   a. yes  b. no  c. perhaps
15. Will your audience be paying full attention? Is your talk scheduled for
   a. early morning
   b. midday
   c. just before or after a meal
d. late in the day
e. first or last day of the meeting

16. How ill your age, sex, background, regional accent or training affect your credibility with this audience?

17. Does this audience have biases? Will their sex, age, region, training, or specialty affect how they respond to your message?

18. Is this audience’s attendance voluntary or mandatory?

19. Will your examples be familiar to this audience? Are they students, trainees, healthcare providers, scientists, other?

20. List three challenging questions they might ask:

_________________________________
_________________________________
_________________________________

**Visual Aids**

21. Will you have any visual aids?
   a. Powerpoints  b. handouts  c. other

22. Write a statement of purpose for each visual.

23. Are the visuals for the audience, not for you?
Adapted from St James & Spiro:

“Dr. M. is a family practice physician. He has been asked to give a 30-minute talk on depression to three very different groups: (1) members of the community who volunteer the hospital, (2) a group of school nurses, and (3) a group of family practice residents. Can he give the same talk? Not if he hopes to give successful talks. Each of these groups has different needs and interests. Dr. M. will have to prepare each talk to meet the different needs of each audience.

Why might the community volunteers be attending a talk on depression? To learn more about the pharmacokinetics of antidepressant drugs? Probably not. It is more likely that members of this group are interested in depression because they, or someone they know, have suffered from depression. This audience is probably more interested in knowing the answers to the following questions: What is depression? Who gets it? Is there a cure? How can I help a friend or family member who is depressed?

For his talk to the school nurses, Dr. M. may focus on the differences between depression in adults and in children, discussing the common signs and symptoms of depression in children. And finally, to the family practice residents, Dr. M. might discuss sex-related differences in responsivity to antidepressants.”
From St. James & Spiro, Writing and Speaking for Excellence

The Seven Deadly Sins of Speaking:

1. Not meeting the needs of the audience
   --The more you know, the better you will meet their needs & agenda
2. An unclear purpose –
   --what is my purpose? Know difference between subject, title, purpose
3. Lack of organization
   --Give an overview stating main points and stick to it
4. Unnecessary information
   --select a few things worth remembering
5. Monotonous Voice and sloppy speech
   --Show excitement, use familiar and comfortable words
6. Unnecessary, unclear or inappropriate visuals
   --every slide must have a purpose, be legible & readable
7. Reading the talk
   --usually dull, devoid of gesture, eye contact, inflection, enthusiasm
The closing of a presentation is often the most important part. This is the final chance to reiterate the call to action and make a lasting impression. Following are four different types of presentation closings. Select the type of closing based on your presentation content and audience.

**Matching Close**

This closing is designed to sell the function, features, benefits, and advantages of a product or service. The opening of the presentation defines the desired characteristics. The body demonstrates that the product or service meets those characteristics. And the close summarizes the key characteristics and moves the audience to the product or service with the matching characteristics defined in the opening. By getting audience "buy-in" of the defined characteristics in the opening of your presentation, the closing is a "no-brainer" in moving your audience to purchase your product or service that meets the defined characteristics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Matching Close</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Define characteristics desired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate characteristics of product/service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relate how product features/benefits match desired characteristics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pyramid Close**

Many times a presenter has a substantial number of points to make in a presentation. Unfortunately, audiences only remember three to four main items. By creating a series of "key point" pyramids, presenters can categorize and weight which points are most important. Using a pyramid close, key points are listed at the top of the pyramid and remaining points are listed below. The opening should mention the key points and the body should define the key points in detail. The closing should reinforce/reiterate the key points and move the audience to the call-to-action.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Pyramid Close</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Define key points to discuss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe key points in-depth using defined subpoints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarize key points and relate call-to-action to those points</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Solution Close

The solution close is designed to show an audience how to solve a complicated problem/issue. This type of closing breaks down a large problem or issue into subcomponents. The presenter's goal is to demonstrate to the audience how each one can be addressed, thus solving the overall problem. The opening of the presentation should define the problem or issue. The body should break down the issue into subcomponents and provide solutions to each. The close should wrap all of the mini-solutions together. This organization demonstrates that addressing the subcomponents of a problem can solve the main one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Solution Close</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Future Close

Predicting a successful future can be an excellent way to close a presentation. People like good news. By showing an audience where they are at present, the factors that will affect the future, and how you can help them succeed in this future, you can effectively reach your audience and make a powerful close. The key to this approach is being realistic in what you predict for the future.

The opening of this type of presentation should define where the audience is at present. The body of the presentation should outline the facts, figures, and strategy options. The close should make predictions for the future based on the facts and strategy selected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Future Close</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening</td>
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<tr>
<td>Body</td>
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<tr>
<td>Closing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Q: Why didn’t you do the study that I would have done?

A: This one is easy to answer. Smile, and say something like, “That’s an interesting idea, but not what we set out to do in this study.”

2. Q: Why didn’t you mention my previous work?

A: If you are familiar with the work, and it is good: “Thanks for pointing that out. I didn’t have time to discuss all the excellent studies on this question.”
A: If you are familiar with the work, and it is not good: “Thanks for pointing that out. I didn’t have time to discuss all the previous studies on this question.”
A: If you are not familiar with the work: “Thanks for pointing that out. I’m not familiar with that study, but I’ll be sure to look into it.”

3. Q: Could there be confounding (laboratory error, etc.)?

A: If you dealt with the concern: “That’s an important concern, which we tried to minimize by doing ....”
A: If you considered and rejected the concern: “We considered that possibility, but decided that it was unlikely because ....”
A: If you did not consider the concern: “That’s an interesting suggestion that we hadn’t considered.”

4. Q: Why didn’t you use the “X” statistic (or the “Y” technique)? (This question has several variants, such as “Why didn’t you measure quality of life using the instrument I just developed?”)

A: If you did use it: “We did, and the results were very similar,” or “We did, and the results changed slightly, and ....,” or “We did, and the results were different.”
A: If you did not use it: “That’s an interesting suggestion.”

5. Q: Can your results be generalized?

A: “The most conservative interpretation is that our results apply only to two-humped camels. We’re comfortable extrapolating to one-humped camels and llamas, but would be cautious about generalizing to all mammals.”

Several other common types of problems may come up during the question-and-answer session. For instance, how do you respond when you do not know the answer? “That’s an interesting question that I cannot answer.” Because this reply goes against the natural tendency to answer even when one does not know, practice it a few times.

How do you respond when the questioner missed the answer during the presentation? “Perhaps I wasn’t clear when I presented ....”

What if you cannot understand the question, especially if the questioner is not fluent in English? “I’m afraid I’m having difficulty with your question. Perhaps we could discuss it after the session.”

How do you respond when the questioner persists or is hostile? “Maybe we could continue this discussion after the session. Next question.” Turn to the session chair for help. Part of that person’s responsibility is to ensure that the question-and-answer session does not bog down. In this regard, it helps if the chair knows you, even if he or she just met you a few minutes before the session. If the chair does not step in, then turn and ask, “Who has the next question?”

What do you do when someone asks a two-part (or more) question? These are rude. (Sorry, but they are. Do not ask them of your colleagues; ask one question at a time. If you must ask two questions, say, “I have two questions. The first question is ....” and wait for the reply before asking a second.) It is very difficult to keep track of two questions. Fortunately, everyone in the audience knows this, and most will not remember both questions either. So do not worry about it. Answer one of the questions. Then, if you cannot remember the other one, say “Could you repeat the other question?” There is a good chance the questioner will have forgotten as well.
Scientific Presentations: References


Adult Learning from University of Hawaii Faculty Development, Stephen Lieb and others building on the work of Malcom Knowles: