

Many people have a natural understanding of what it might mean to be a visual learner simply by the title of this particular learning preference. Clearly, there is an emphasis on visual materials and learning most effective through the use of what is seen rather than what is heard or read. To delineate the differences between the visual learning style and others, it is helpful to consider the different learning styles by putting yourself in the shoes of a coach. It is up to a coach, much like any other kind of instructor, to communicate through coaching this material to a group with diverse learning styles so that that group may then go forth and put what was learned into instant action—on the field, court, or other athletic venue.

One of the reasons why the coaching analogy is best for discussing learning styles is because the information given by a coach must be immediately applied and often, in the heat of the game, quickly applied. For instance, a coach needs to be able to take a fast time-out in order to quickly describe a play so that it can be used immediately. If even one of the players did not grasp what was being communicated, it can mean the difference between winning or losing.

For the visual learner, using items with visual aids about how plays and other in-game actions are to take place such as playbooks is one of the best ways to teach, at least in terms of coaching, thus in teaching as well. (Baribeau 2007). For these players, it is the best strategy to use these visual materials and, in the case of complicated plays, chalkboards and computer simulations of actual player movements. The players who have a visual learning preference can then see instantly how the play or move is supposed to work and can implement it immediately by replicating what they just saw. This is the same thing for teachers of more structured subjects—they can present a “playbook” in the form of drawings and other illustrations using overhead projectors, presentations, or other disseminated drawn materials to highlight important concepts and their “players” can then use these during the game—which in the case of the classroom is a test.

While kinesthetic and auditory learners can benefit from these same visual representations as

supplements, for visual learners, the key is to “show” them how their actions on the field, court, or at their desk should work. Other learning preferences may prefer that you explain in great detail or present a long narrative that they can take home and read before putting their learning into practice. Visual learners need to see in order to do and this can be valuable to coaches and any other kind of instructor, especially when you can watch what you’ve shown repeated back exactly.

As a coach, just like with any other instructor, you would want to be able to relate information that can be processed as quickly and thoroughly as possible, but you also want that information to be immediately available for use by your player so that he or she can immediately go and implement that knowledge during the contest. Coaches are not much different than instructors of any other subject, the only difference is that their teaching results in active versus inactive (sitting to take a test, for example) production of the results of teaching.