A Colourful Way to Learn Visually

Visual learners can maximize their learning style by using colour, shapes, and patterns of arrangement to do everything from processing reading material to managing their time. Whether you are predominantly a visual learner, or another type of learner, the strategies listed below can be very useful. Use the following suggestions as a springboard to creative reflection on your learning needs and to help you think of new ways to make your learning style work for you.

Study strategies

Use a colour-coding scheme to denote important elements of class notes and assigned reading material. Use the same scheme for every class. Maintain these colour schemes with other study materials that you make, such as flash cards or summary notes. For example,

Red = definitions, key terms

Blue = important people (theorists, etc.), noteworthy books and articles

Yellow = important concepts, the main points of an article or chapter

Use geometric shapes to enhance the use of colour. For example,

Add coloured stars in the margins to draw attention to important material (for example, a red star to denote an important definition). Alternatively, you may want to star all key material for easy reviewing before exams.

Use coloured boxes according to your colour scheme to separate important information (such as formulas or definitions) from the body of the text. This visual technique helps to create a hierarchy of information by making the important points more prominent, while also making it easier to review important information before exams.

Research strategies

For writing research papers, use different coloured highlighters to sort and organize your research notes prior to writing your draft. This works best when you have an essay outline of the main points you will be discussing.

Establish a colour code using your essay outline as a key or legend for your colour scheme. For example,

Supporting Argument 1 = yellow

Supporting Argument 2 = blue

Supporting Argument 3 = red

As you read through your research notes, highlight the material with a colour according to where it will be used in the essay.

It's very easy to organize the writing process using this method because each planned paragraph or essay section will have its own colour in the research notes. As you write your draft, you can easily find blocks of coloured information in your research notes rather than searching for specific points in a sea of text. This will not only save you time when writing the draft, it will also clarify your thinking and help you shape your argument.

Time management strategies

In your daily planner and/or calendar, use colour to indicate a category of entry. For example,

Recreation = yellow

Exams = pink

Assignments = blue

Meetings, Appointments = green

Reminders = orange

Think in pictures; learn in colour!

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