

What Is it Like to Be a 3-D Learner?

Marcia Hart

Sensory Thinker

Simply stated, a 3-D learner is someone who primarily learns and thinks through their senses. Part of what makes a 3-D learner function so well in the world's environment or day-to-day tasks is their constant use of the senses of touch, sight, hearing, taste, smell, balance, and rhythm to adapt to and figure out what is going on or needs to be done to achieve the goals at hand.

With their senses, a 3-D learner experiences what they see, what they hear, what they read, what others say to them, etc., instead of noticing and thinking about it from the distance of logical thought. Their thinking is primarily sensory and holistic (seemingly intuitive), not logical and linear (deductive) like the majority of their friends.

While a 3-D learner reads, they run a "movie" or "audiotape" in their head of what they are reading. As long as they can recognize the words and they fit with their running movie or tape, the story makes sense to them. When they meet words that they do not recognize, they may hesitate, substitute words, misread words, or skip excerpts. If this interruption happens too often while reading, they lose a sense (literally lose their sensory experience) of the meaning of the story they are reading. They must start again from the beginning to build a new sensory experience of the story of the text. 3-D learners, therefore, often must read, reread, and reread text material to understand it.

Memorizing Does Not Lead to Comprehension

When the 3-D learner is young, they might learn to memorize and then seem to be able to read words, particularly abstract words (we call them Sight Words), that they have never understood. To those around them, they *sound* as though they can read. However, they are unable to build a sensory experience of the words that they are reading aloud and cannot tell you the details of what they have just read. Or they might give you an entirely different story, one that fits the sensory experience that they did have while reading the words they could recognize!

Written Sight Words and Abstract Symbols

Flat, 2-dimensional sight (abstract) words, letters, and punctuation marks make learning to read fluidly and with comprehension difficult for the 3-D learner. Sight words and abstract symbols have no associated sensory meaning like concrete words have! Sight words and abstract symbols do not stimulate the senses so they can be understood with sensory experiences. If mastery of abstract symbols and sight words is missing in the education of the young 3-D learner, then they are likely to have repeated failures in reading. What comes tumbling down is their willingness, desire, confidence, and ability to read.

The 3-D learner needs 3-D tools to help them learn to make sight words into something they can experience with their senses. Once they 3-dimensionally master the 300 sight words and symbols that are read in grades K-5, they have a chance to learn to read like their peers and read to learn in school. By eliminating the confusion associated with sight words and abstract symbols, the reader can function in the academic world just like they function naturally in the environment around them. Then, they can function and even become competitive in a world that is filled largely with logical thinkers and readers who think differently than they think.

Learn to Read, so you can Read to Learn.™