



Workplace Experience/Experiential Learning/Practical Experience

Experiential Model Theory

In the experiential model, there are two different ways of *grasping* experience:

- Abstract Conceptualization
- Concrete Experience

Two ways of *transforming* experience:

- Active Experimentation
- Reflective Observation

These four modes of learning are often portrayed as a cycle, concrete experience provides information that serves as a basis for reflection. From these reflections, we [assimilate](#) the information and form abstract concepts.

People then use these concepts to develop new theories about the world, which they then actively test.

Through the testing of our ideas, we once again gather information through experience, cycling back to the beginning of the process. The process does not necessarily begin with experience, however. Instead, each person must choose which learning mode will work best based upon the specific situation.

For example, let's imagine that you are going to learn how to drive a car:

- One person may choose to begin learning via reflection by observing other people as they drive.
- Another might prefer to start more abstractly, by reading and analyzing a driving instruction book.
- Yet, a different person could decide to just jump right in and get behind the seat of a car to practice driving on a test course.

Preferences Play a Role

How do we decide which mode of experiential learning will work best? While situational variables are important, our own preferences play a large role. Kolb notes that people who are considered "watchers" prefer reflective observation, while those who are "doers" are more likely to engage in active experimentation.

"Because of our hereditary equipment, our particular past life experiences, and the demands of our environment, we develop a preferred way of choosing," Kolb explains.

In this learning style model, each of the four types has dominant learning abilities in two areas. For example, people with the diverging learning style are dominant in the areas of concrete experience and reflective observation.

Factors That Influence Learning Styles

A number of different factors can influence preferred learning styles. Some of the factors that he has identified include:

- Adaptive competencies
- Career choice
- Current job role
- Educational specialization
- Personality type

