

# LEARNING STYLES

TALK TO PEOPLE IN THEIR OWN  
LEARNING LANGUAGES



Compiled by Cindy Tonkin

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## Catering to Learning styles - the 4mat

How is that some people's favourite style of teaching (or learning) is just hanging out and sharing knowledge? Others think that a lecture is the only way to go. Some are right into action learning, getting their hands dirty. And others still seem to learn from almost every experience or encounter?

Why are some people all about the theory and others only about application? This is what the 4 learning styles of the 4mat, developed by Berenice McCarthy, is all about.

Her theory is that there are these 4 learning styles, and that these learning styles, when sequenced, create a useful way to cater to all learning styles.

The 4 types of learner are:

- Why (imaginative) learners
- What (analytical) learners
- How (common sense) learners
- What if (dynamic) learners.

Here's a little more about each type, and then you will find graphics on the following pages which explain:

- how to use the 4mat as a training design tool
- the different facilitator roles throughout the cycle.

## Why Quadrant - the Imaginative learners

Why quadrant learners are also called “imaginative learners”. They:

- think imaginatively and believe in their own experience
- are thoughtful people who enjoy observing others
- are interested in people and culture
- absorb reality
- excel in viewing direct experience from many perspectives

They are people centred

- learn by listening and sharing ideas
- value insightful thinking
- work for harmony
- need to be personally involved
- seek commitment

When why quadrant learners teach, they are interested in facilitating individual growth. They:

- try to help people become more self aware
- believe learning should enhance one’s ability to be authentic and real
- see knowledge as enhancing personal insights
- encourage authenticity in people
- like discussions, group work and realistic feedback about feelings
- care about people and seek to engage others in cooperative efforts
- are aware of social forces that affect human development
- like to focus on meaningful goals
- tend to become fearful under pressure and sometimes lack daring

**Strength:** Innovation and ideas

**Function by:** empowering people

**Goals:** to be involved in important issues and to foster community

**Favourite Question:** Why?



# What Quadrant - the Analytic learners

**What** learners like to form theories and models by integrating their observations into what they know. They:

- seek continuity
- need to know what the experts think
- learn by thinking through ideas
- are uncomfortable with subjective judgements
- value sequential thinking

They enjoy collecting data and critiquing information

- need details
- will re-examine facts if situations perplex them
- are thorough and industrious, prefer to maximise certainty
- enjoy traditional classrooms (schools are made for these people)
- are more interested in ideas than people

As learning facilitators they are interested in transmitting knowledge

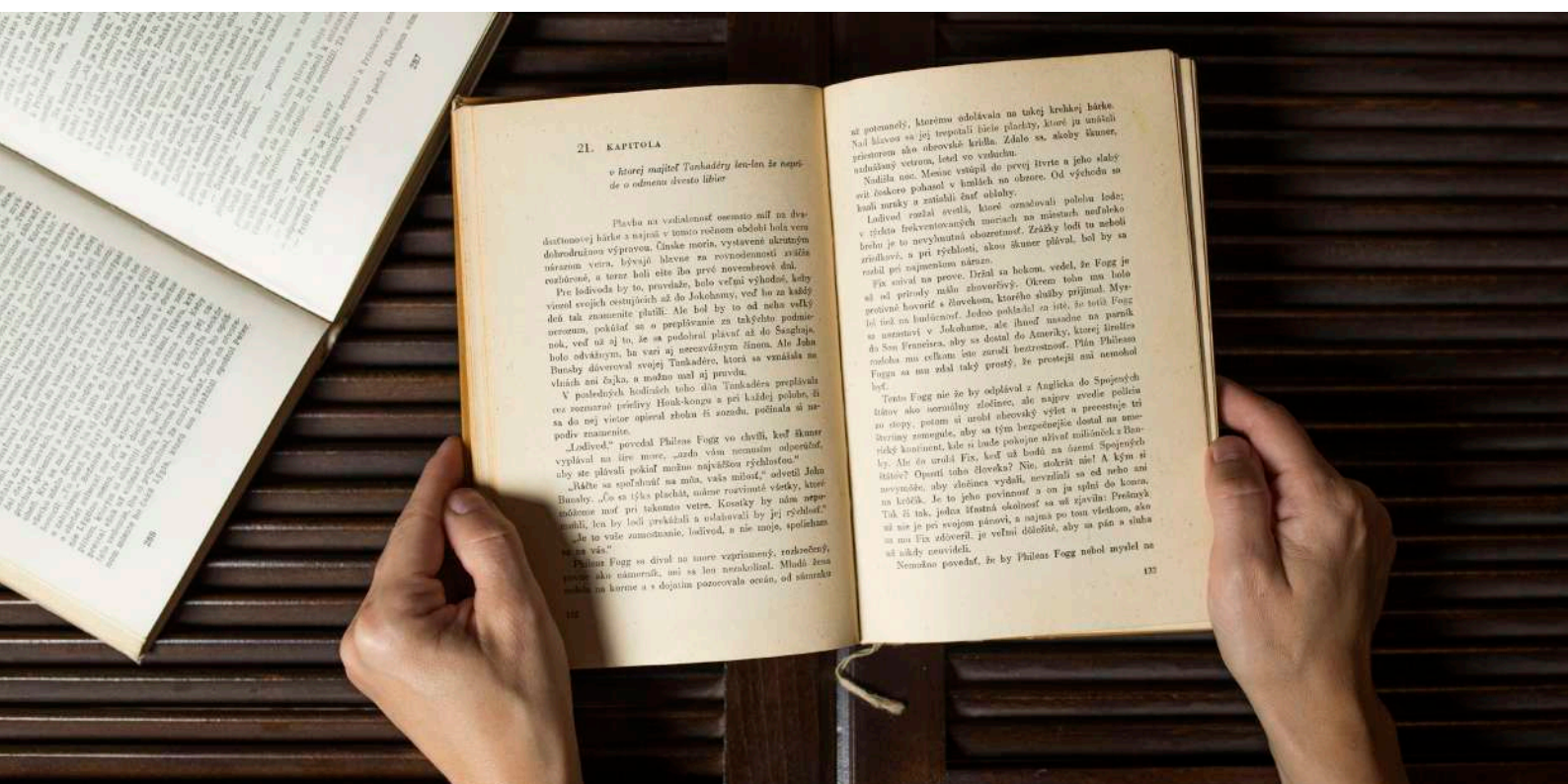
- try to be as accurate and knowledgeable as possible
- believe curricula should further understanding of significant information and should be presented systematically
- encourage outstanding learners
- like facts, details, organisation and sequential thinking
- are traditional instructors who seek to imbue a love of precise knowledge
- believe in the rational use of authority
- tend to discourage creativity by a dominating attitude

**Strength:** Strategic planning

**Function by:** Thinking things through

**Goals:** Recognition of expertise

**Favourite Question:** What?



## How Quadrant - the Common Sense learners

The **How** quadrant learners integrate theory and practice

- learn by testing theories and applying common sense
- are pragmatists: they believe, “if it works, use it!”
- are down to earth problem solvers who resent being given answers
- do not stand on ceremony, but get right to the point

They have limited tolerance for fuzzy ideas

- value strategic thinking
- are skills oriented
- experiment and tinker with things
- need to know how things work
- edit reality, cut right to the heart of things
- sometimes bossy and impersonal

As learning facilitators they are interested in productivity and competence

- try to give learners the skills they will need in life
- believe curricula should be geared to competencies and economic usefulness
- see knowledge as enabling learners to make their own way
- encourage practical applications
- tend to be inflexible and self contained
- use measured rewards
- believe the best way is determined scientifically
- like technical skills and hands on activities
- can lack team work skills

**Strength:** Practical application of ideas

**Function by:** Using factual data garnered from concrete, bottom line data

**Goals:** Quality and efficiency

**Favourite Question:** How does this work?



## What if Quadrant - the Dynamic learners

The **What if** learners want to integrate experience and application

- learn by trial and error
- believe in self discovery
- are enthusiastic about new things
- often reach accurate conclusions in the absence of logical justification

They are at ease with people

- are adaptable, sometimes relish change
- excel when flexibility is needed
- enrich reality by taking what is and adding to it
- are sometimes seen as manipulative and pushy, are risk takers

As learning facilitators they are interested in enabling learner self discovery

- try to help people act on their visions
- believe curricula should be geared to learners' interests and inclinations

They see knowledge as necessary for improving the large society

- encourage experiential thinking
- like variety in instructional methods
- are dramatic teachers who seek to energise their learner
- attempt to create new forms, to stimulate life
- are able to draw new boundaries
- tend to rashness and manipulation

**Strength:** Seeing the whole picture

**Function by:** Acting on the cutting edge

**Goals:** To bring action to ideas

**Favourite Question:** If?





## Using the 4Mat to plan communications

You can use the four 4mat styles to design communication.

- Start with Why the communication is important (what's in it for me?)
- Go on to the 2 or 3 key principles of the idea (the what)
- Move into the practical applications, exercises or hands on information (the how)
- Then take it back into the real world and the effect it will have there now that we have the communication (the what if).

Use the charts on the next few pages to begin to understand the intricacies of each quadrant from a facilitator perspective.



**Building rapport**

- Pace and Lead
- Universals
- Truisms
- Cover all bases...
- Use their language and frames of reference

**Setting the frame**

- Set appropriate context
- Build response potential
- Pace out objections and resistance
- Directionalise thinking

**Using the world views as motivations**

Link to all world views and value sets

- Power
- Security
- Materialism
- Community
- Etc.

- Motivate
- Tempt
- Invite
- Appeal to emotions
- Like your audience
- Seek to understand

**Building thirst for the audience and the solutions**

**Conceptual Solution**  
 Calibrate your audience...  
 Make sure they are thirsty for your content before your transition...

**Know your outcome**  
 Create relevance and desire

Why?

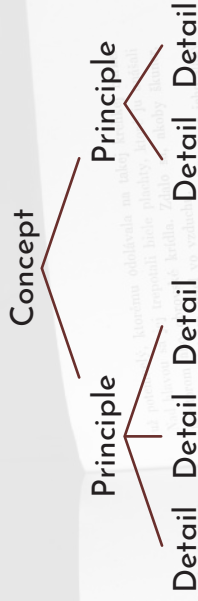


# What?

Deliver information and solutions  
**Showpersonship**

- Teach
- share information
- shine the light of understanding
- be a living example
- entertain

## CPD Hierarchy



1. Provide relevance
2. 3-4 Chunks
3. Appropriate sequence
4. Backtrack
5. Future pace

## Appropriate style

- Voice
- Volume
- Tempo
- Pitch
- Rhythm
- Gesture
- Body Movement
- Eye Contact

## Magic formula stories

MFS help illustrate and support your content, influence and persuade, handle objections

### MFS

- 80% incident
- 10% points
- 10% benefit

## Selling the idea

Pack information in a manner which is memorable, logical and clear whilst retaining the **thirst of the why frame**

Teacher role

Facilitator-driven

## Debrief - Set the standards

Elicit the learning.  
Add further distinctions  
debrief to groups or driven  
by facilitator; if needed  
repeat the how frame until  
standards are met.

- empower
- micro-chunk the procedure
- provide feedback by walking around
- encourage to ask questions
- have high standards

# How?

## Lock the learning into the neurology

*Time for practice and integration*

### Keep it simple chunk for success

Clarity is the key the participant must be clear on what they need to do in the practice or exercise. Provide a step-by-step procedures.

### Guide the behaviour (unconsciously)

Demonstration phase.  
Provide a frame of reference and a conscious standard of excellence and/or competence.

Coaching role

Training Environment

Learner-driven

Student-driven

- *define a new reality*
- *lock in learning*
- *cross-contextualise*
- *make the learning real*
- *presuppose learning*

Real World

Future pace - create scenarios of application

Use presuppositions. Simply presume the learning will be used. Paint a number of pictures where the learning will be used, trigger anchors.

Add value - provide the unexpected

Provide cherry on the top present as an after-thought an extra handout, a MFS, Some extra support from the Why frame.

Colleague role

Link back to why frame and concrete reality

**FUD Factor** by now all fear, uncertainty and doubt will be handled. Ensure the participants are in the inspired state-close **dynamically!**

Return to the Big Picture

Link back to values and framing - close loops that are still open. Close any nested stories. Chunk up to concept of the training.

Future pace learning, create no choice, anchor

Adding value - defining the future

# What if (so what?)

## Preparing a communication using the 4mat

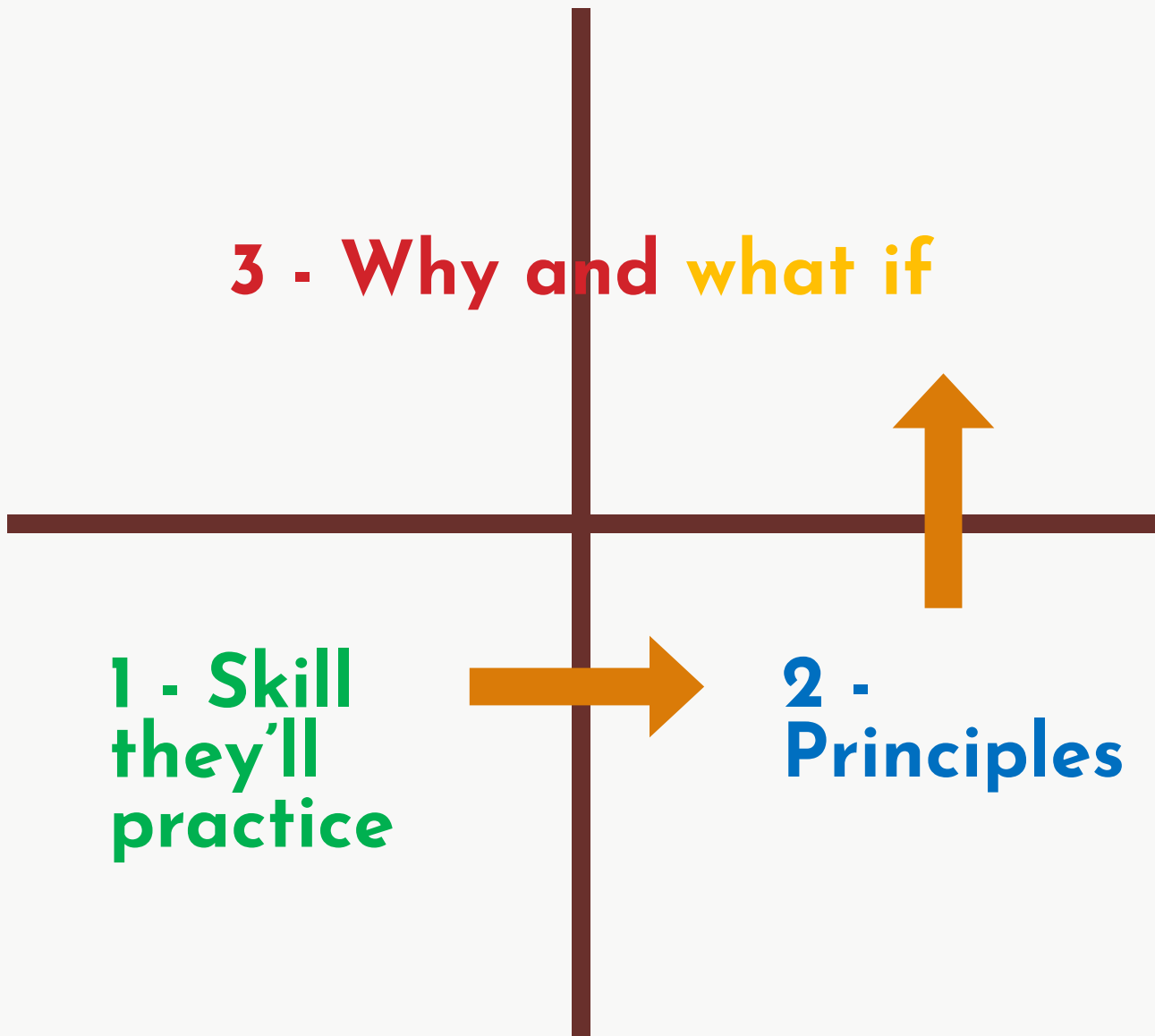


Figure 1: 4mat - order of preparation for a training session or presentation -present in a why, what, how, what if order, but prepare in how, what, why what if

## About the author - Cindy Tonkin

Cindy Tonkin is the Consultants' Consultant.

She is a management consultant with more than 20 years experience.

She specialises in soft skills for clever people, and has a niche with data analysts. She runs several consulting brands, improvises, creates visual art and hangs out with her cats in Newtown, NSW Australia.

Cindy's first book, the **Australian Consultants' Guide** helped more than 6000 consultants set up their business.

Cindy gives consultants and managers tools to make doing business with people easy. She is one of the best-educated NLP-trained consultants operating in the business environment, with masters-level qualifications from the Université de Paris VIII and a First-Class Honours Degree from Sydney University. Cindy has worked for big consultancies such as Accenture and KPMG and boutique consultancies like her own. She has truckloads of practical, on-the-floor experience implementing organisational change from Chief Executive to Supervisor Level.

Her clients include major consultancy firms, public service organisations and Financial Services companies with internal consulting forces. She has written a fleet of books on how to make consulting businesses work more effectively, and how to be a better consultant.

In this century all of Cindy's clients have been repeat or referral business, a testament to her good work.



Cindy writes regularly for publications like Mortgage Professional Australia and Executive Excellence magazines. She has been featured on Radio 2GB and ABC Radio, in the Sydney Morning Herald and the Sun-Herald. She is a sought-after keynote speaker on a range of soft skills topics.

Visit Cindy's Blog:

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