

**A Guide for Getting To Know  
The Way They Learn** by Cynthia Ulrich Tobias, M.Ed.

**Communicating With Your Child's Teacher: A Student Profile**

The following is based on information in *The Way They Learn* by Cynthia Ulrich Tobias. It is designed to be a guide for parents in describing each individual child's strengths and preferences to a teacher. **You have permission to copy and distribute this Profile for personal and small group/classroom use, as long as you do not use or sell the Profile commercially, revise the Profile in any way, or, except as specifically provided above, use the Profile in a manner that is inconsistent with the rights granted the author under 17 U.S.C. § 106.** As you share this information with your child's teacher, remember, you are sharing what you know about your child and asking the teacher for insights that may aid you in helping your child understand, appreciate and cope with demands in the classroom that may or may not match his or her natural learning style. Whenever possible, fill out the following with your child together.

**Child's Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

*Each line represents a continuum—place a mark somewhere between the extremes.*

**I. How Do You Best Concentrate?**

**Seems most alert during which time(s) of day?**

\_\_\_\_\_

*Early morning*

*Late evening*

**When doing his or her best work, needs or doesn't need intake (food or drink).**

\_\_\_\_\_

*Need to eat or drink*

*Distracted by eating or drinking*

**Seems to be able to concentrate best in bright or dim light?**

\_\_\_\_\_

*Bright light*

*Dim light*

**Is almost always most comfortable doing homework in a formal, or informal setting?**

\_\_\_\_\_

*Formal (desk, table)*

*Informal (floor, bed, sofa)*

**II. How Do You Best Remember?**

**When trying to remember or review, is successful most often when he or she can:**

Repeat the words aloud, drill verbally, or turn the information into a song or rhyme.

\_\_\_\_\_

*Almost always*

*Almost never*

See a picture of what is meant, sketch out an idea, use colorful folders to organize.

\_\_\_\_\_

*Almost always*

*Almost never*

Keep on the move, take frequent breaks, work in spurts of great energy, shift positions.

\_\_\_\_\_

*Almost always*

*Almost never*

### III. How Do You Process and Interact With Information?

#### When listening to information or directions, usually seems to:

Get the gist of things, understand the main idea.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Almost always*

*Almost never*

Remember specific details, can repeat things word for word.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Almost always*

*Almost never*

#### When reading, often

Reads quickly, skipping unfamiliar words; tends to choose fiction or personal interest.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Almost always*

*Almost never*

Reads slowly and deliberately, reads every word, stops when there is an unfamiliar word; tends to choose subjects that can further knowledge, not much light reading.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Almost always*

*Almost never*

#### When organizing, usually

Works with piles, not files; spreads materials out over several areas; tends to procrastinate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Almost always*

*Almost never*

Works best with a structured schedule; needs a clear and efficient work space; needs to break larger projects into manageable parts.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Almost always*

*Almost never*

### IV. How Do You Understand and Communicate What You Know?

#### When learning, is

More interested in obvious facts than in hidden meanings.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Almost always*

*Almost never*

Often interested in where a person got the facts.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Almost always*

*Almost never*

Most interested in the background of the person giving the facts.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Almost always*

*Almost never*

Mostly just interested in how much of the facts are really necessary.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Almost always*

*Almost never*

**On a day-to-day basis, prefers**

Having a parent or teacher provide predictable plans and routines.

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*Almost always*

*Almost never*

Designing his or her own schedules or routines.

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*Almost always*

*Almost never*

Knowing what will make everyone else happy.

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*Almost always*

*Almost never*

Doing whatever the inspiration of the moment dictates.

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*Almost always*

*Almost never*

**When it comes to responding to authority figures, seems to especially need:**

**Clear and specific rules and expectations.**

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*Almost always*

*Almost never*

**Logical reasons for procedures and guidelines.**

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*Almost always*

*Almost never*

**Reassurance of personal worth despite making a mistake.**

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*Almost always*

*Almost never*

**To feel the mutual respect of the person in authority and input on the issues.**

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*Almost always*

*Almost never*



## Talking to the Teacher

**When talking to your child's teacher, keep the following in mind:**

1. Treat the teacher as the expert. Assume the best, and approach the teacher in a positive, upbeat way.
2. Let the teacher know what you have read, and ask for his or her opinion. (Perhaps even loan the teacher a copy of *The Way They Learn!*) Ask the teacher to give you some ideas for further reading.
3. When discussing your child, start many of your questions with the same four words: "What can I do?" For example, "Jane's learning style is very different from your teaching style. I think it's great that she is learning how to deal with lots of different approaches. I'm wondering, though, what could I do to help her understand the way you teach? What could I do at home that might help her succeed better in your classroom?" Let the teacher know you and your child are taking the responsibility for learning and coping with the classroom demands.
4. Recognize that there are very practical limitations on what the teacher can do for your child. Try to make it as easy as possible for the teacher to accommodate your child's learning style while still meeting bottom-line outcomes. For example, if you have discovered that your child needs to follow a certain system for recording and keeping track of homework, you go ahead and make up the necessary assignment sheets so that the teacher would only need to fill in a couple blanks and sign the bottom.
5. Remember, every teacher is a lesson in learning for your child. The more variety he or she experiences in the classroom, the more opportunities your child will have to discover and develop natural style strengths and to use them to cope with uncomfortable style demands. Instead of resenting a different teaching approach, do your best to help your child understand and value a variety of methods. By helping children discover and appreciate their teachers' unique styles, you can be preparing them to face a world of differences with the confidence of knowing they can use their strengths to cope with almost anything!