

## Extension Material 11.5

### Learning styles

Honey and Mumford developed Kolb's model of learning further. They expressed the view that the learning cycle can be entered at any stage, and that the preferred entry point to the learning cycle is determined by the individual's preferred learning style. They described four learning styles, which relate to entering the learning cycle at different points, as shown in Figure 11.5.

#### Activists

People with this learning style like to learn by doing. They like new experiences and opportunities to learn. They like to be involved and prefer to learn by doing, rather than by sitting and listening. They are the learners who are regarded as those who will read the instructions only if all else fails!

#### Reflectors

Those with this learning style like to think, observe, and reflect before actually trying something. They enjoy reviewing what has happened and what they have learned, and will prefer to reach conclusions in their own time.

#### Theorists

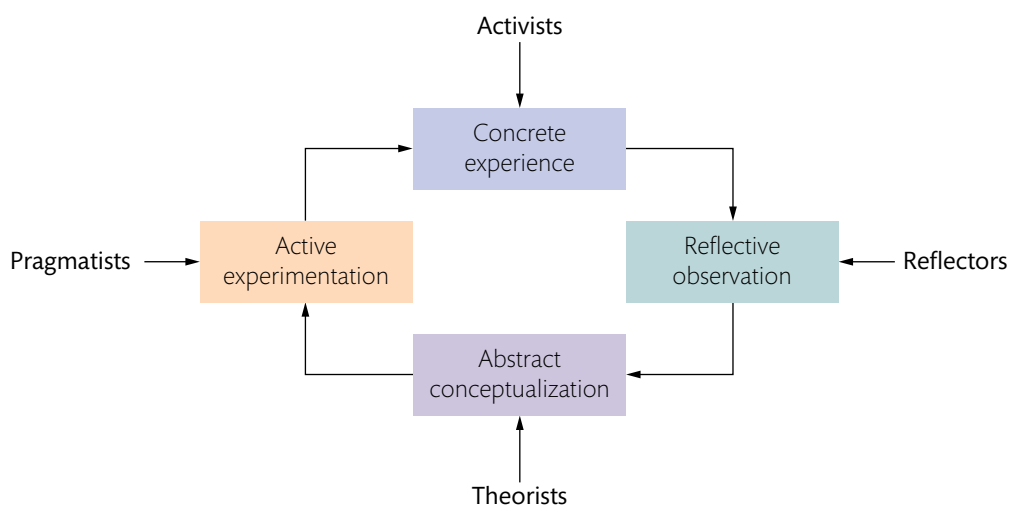
Those with this style will prefer to think problems through in a step-by-step, logical way and to ask questions. They tend to be detached and analytical, and to prefer models and systems. A theorist is, perhaps, more likely to pick up the instructions first.

#### Pragmatists

Individuals with this learning style like practical solutions and enjoy testing their ideas. They like to experiment and try out their ideas. They act quickly and confidently, and have a down-to-earth approach, responding to problems as a challenge.

#### *The relevance of learning styles to the provision of training*

Learners will have different preferred learning styles and it is important to take these into consideration when designing a learning intervention, whether or not this involves one-to-one training, group training, or learning through involvement in new activities. In a one-to-one training session, it might be helpful to identify the learner's preferred style and enter the learning cycle at this point. For example, if we consider learning how to use a new computer system, the activists and pragmatists may prefer to switch it on and start pressing buttons, reflecting upon this later. Theorists and reflectors, however, may prefer an overview or a presentation about the new system, why it is being introduced, and



**Figure 11.5** Honey and Mumford's learning styles in relation to Kolb's learning cycle

Source: Adapted from: Kolb, David A., *Experiential Learning: Experience as a Source of Learning* (Pearson Education, 1984); and Honey, P. and Mumford, A., *The Learning Styles Questionnaire* (Peter Horney Publications, 2006).

what processes they will be required to learn. In addition, learners may need additional support and encouragement to move outside their own preferred learning style, and to become familiar with those they are less inclined to adopt. Hence, an activist may need to be encouraged to reflect on their learning, whereas a reflector may need more encouragement to carry out activities. Kolb's conceptualization of learning suggests that all four of the approaches to learning, when combined, represent the more powerful and effective experience.