

What's Your Motivation Style?

By Marcia L. Conner

Motivation is the force that draws you to move toward something. It can come from a desire or a curiosity within you or can be from an external force urging you on. Motivation styles vary for different situations and topics but nonetheless, you draw on them especially when you try to learn something challenging. If you can recognize your predominant motivational style, you can identify the situations that best satisfy your needs. Likewise, you can't motivate anyone else. All you can do is invite them to learn.

Take a few minutes to complete the following questionnaire assessing your preferred motivation style. These questions have no right or wrong answers. Your response offers insight about how you're motivated to learn. Begin by reading the words in the left-hand column. Of the three responses to the right, circle the one that best characterizes you, answering as honestly as possible with the description that applies to you now. Count the number of circled items and write your total at the bottom of each column.

1. I'm proud when I...	Get things done.	Help other people.	Solve problems by thinking things through.
2. I mostly think about...	What's next.	People.	Different ideas.
3. To relax, I tend to...	Rely on a consistently relaxing activity.	Hang out and talk with friends.	Learn something new.
4. I like to do things...	Right away or on schedule.	When everyone else can do it with me.	When it feels right to me.
5. When online, I like to...	Search for specific information.	Write emails, text message, or chat.	Follow links in many directions.
6. Projects should be...	Finished on time.	Done in groups.	Meaningful to my life.
7. In a school setting, I liked to...	Ask questions.	Make friends.	Explore many topics.
8. I believe schedules...	Keep me organized.	Help me coordinate plans with other people.	Are useful tools to keep me on track.
9. I like to be recognized for...	Being organized, neat, and on time.	Being kind, thoughtful, and considerate to others.	Being smart, clever, curious, and a good problem solver.
10. In terms of completing things...	I finish what I start.	I enlist the help of other people.	I want to be learning from start to finish.
Total	Goal:	Relationship:	Learning:

The column with the highest total represents your primary motivation style. The column with the second-highest total is your secondary motivation style.

Your primary motivation style: _____

Your secondary motivation style: _____

If you are **goal-oriented**, you probably reach for your goals through a direct and obvious route. This might lead you to a reference book, your computer, or to call an expert—whatever means is available. You usually prefer meeting in-person when it's the most effective method and don't find learning, itself, much fun.

If you are **relationship-oriented**, you take part in learning mainly for social contact. When you meet and interact with people, you learn things along the way. You may not like working independently or focusing on topics (separately from the people) because that doesn't give you the interactivity you crave.

If you are **learning-oriented**, the practice of learning, itself, drives you. You search for knowledge because learning delights you and you may become frustrated by anything that requires you to spend more time following procedures than on actual learning.

There is also a fourth motivation style I haven't yet addressed, primarily because it's far less common than the other three styles and because you might not think of it as a motivation style at all. That style is **thrill-oriented**, drawn not to any particular thing but, rather, away from anything that people perceive as tying them down, bounding them, or pulling them in any predictable direction. This isn't to say that thrill-oriented learners can't acquire goals, relationships, or curiosity, but if any of these feel too time-consuming, invasive, or binding, the learner becomes restless and perhaps experiences a compulsion to go in another direction—any other direction—to feel free. If you're thrill-oriented, you're likely to be impulsive and you want to remain impulsive; you seek thrills and flee anything that doesn't offer you that sensation. All of us at one time or another feel impulsive or have an urge to do something else, but we usually moderate these urges when they come, instead of always following where they lead.

More information on each style, along with suggestions on how to maximize your motivation, is available in the book *Learn More Now* (Hoboken, NJ; John Wiley & Sons, 2004).

A previous version of this assessment was published in *Learn More Now: 10 Simple Steps to Learning Better, Smarter, and Faster* (Hoboken, NJ; John Wiley & Sons, March 2004). Learn about the book and read an excerpt at <http://www.marciacconner.com/learnmorenow/>.

Join Marcia Conner's mailing list to receive information about issues related to assessments and learning across the lifespan at <http://www.agelesslearner.com/joinus.html>.

If you are interested in reproducing this assessment for personal or organizational uses, please abide by the following terms of use. This content may be distributed freely without the author's permission provided that 1) the content, contact, and copyright notice remain intact, 2) the URL to the online version appears on every page, 3) you do not charge any fee for its use, 4) you send a note about how, where, and when the content will be used to copyright@marciacconner.com for tracking purposes. If you're interested in using the materials in a commercial or for-fee product, or on a web page, contact the author first to learn about additional guidelines.

MLC051808