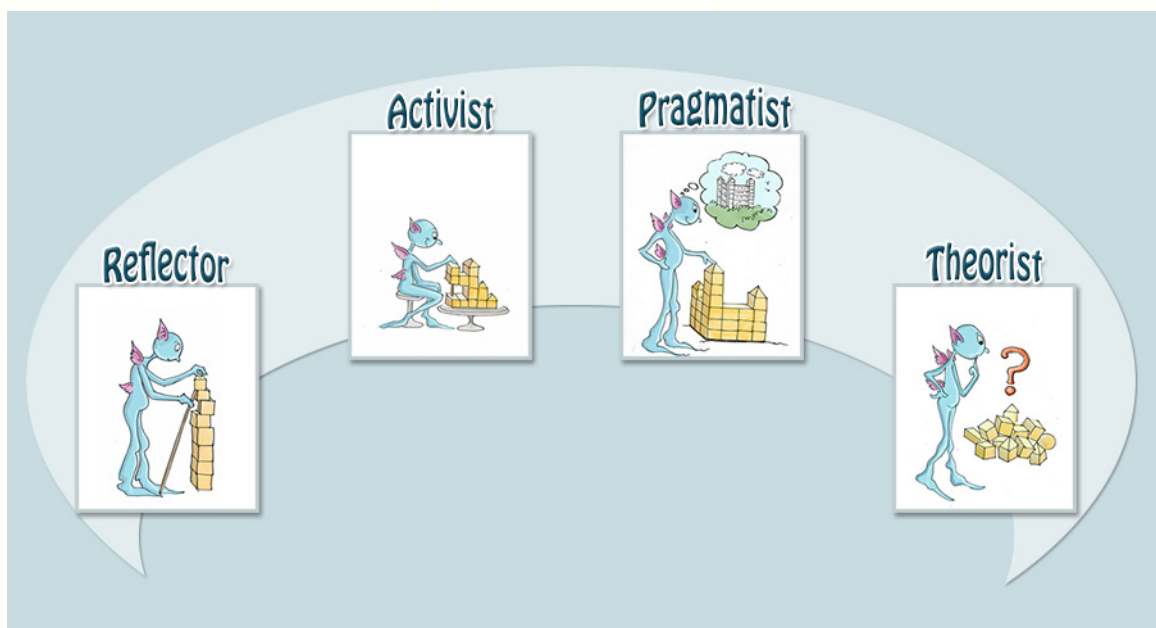


# Honey & Mumford's 4 Learner Types



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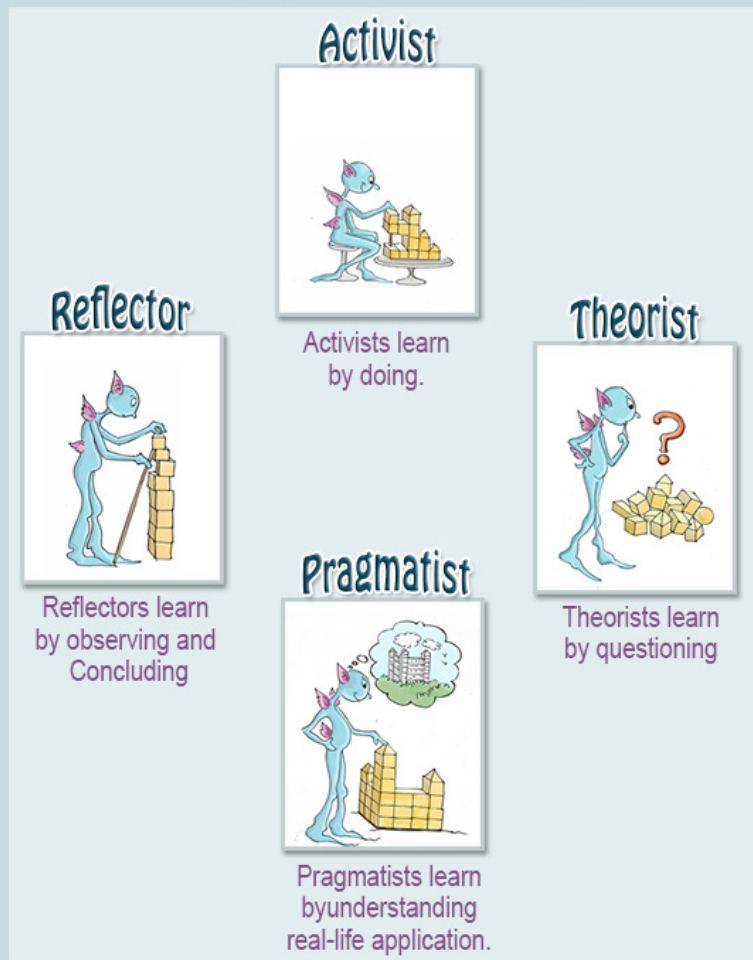


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## Honey and Mumford's Four Types of learners

In 1986, Peter Honey and Alan Mumford classified learners into four types. This classification is based on the learning preferences that people exhibit while learning.



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In 1986, Peter Honey and Alan Mumford, classified learners into four types. Vastly different in its approach from the VAK model that was first proposed in the 1920s by a group of psychologists and later reviewed and repurposed more recently into a four-style model by Fleming and Mills in 1992, by including Reading as the fourth style, the Honey and Mumford model classifies learners as follows:

## THE FOUR TYPES OF LEARNERS

- Activist
- Theorist
- Pragmatist
- Reflector

Quite simply,

- **Activists** like to experience their learning – they learn by doing.
- **Theorists** want to know the why that underlies whatever they learn
- **Pragmatists** like to know the real world (i.e. practical application) of their learning
- **Reflectors** learn by observing and thinking it over to synthesize their conclusions.

As in the case of the **VAK model**, Honey and Mumford's learning styles overlap in learners and they are a function of their chosen path (a research scientist who as a child was a pragmatist could due to habituations transform into a combination of a theorist and reflector, while a theorist who ends up as an instructional designer (yours truly) could turn into a pragmatist. However, one or the other learning styles dominate a person's preferences.

In a classroom or a group of online learners, you could expect an even sprinkling of these learning styles. If you'd like to go deeper and be exact (or, in other words, if you are a Reflector with a penchant for precision,) you could use a questionnaire to get the exact learning style of each member of your audience. This, as any practicing trainer or instructional designer would know, isn't easy.

So, how can we use Honey & Mumford's Classification in Creating Content?

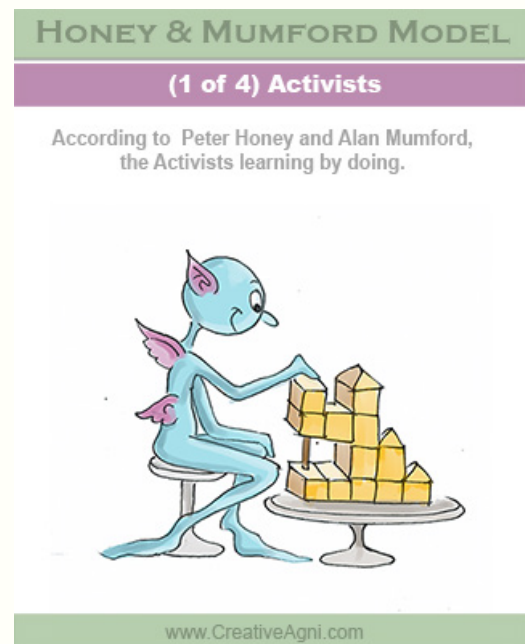
Keeping the four types of learners in your mind while designing both eLearning and classroom content can be of immense help.

## 1. ACTIVIST

### Online Content

For Activists, an online course must have

activities that allow the learner to do the task or see the application of the concept. Obviously, as interactivity comes at a price (that's being brought down by a slew of Rapid Authoring tools such as Adobe Captivate) you may want to balance cost and content-effectiveness for the activists by designing such activities for mostly the important competencies.



### Classroom Content

In a classroom training program, indulging the Activists is easier – the price being only the creativity of the instructional designer, so include short activities that allow the Activists to see the application of a concept or the working of a task, for the important competencies.

## 2. THEORIST

### Online Content

The Theorists learn by questioning. In online courses, their need can be addressed as follows.

For a program that isn't high on real-time

interfacing, the instructional designer must stretch herself to stand in the learner's shoes and reflect upon the questions that would popup in the learner's mind. Include such questions and answers by either designing a narrator (we had Bholu in our online courses,) or by embedding such questions and answering them through the content itself.

For programs that allow the learners to interact with the facilitator, make the process of asking questions easy in a way that the learning process doesn't get hampered. Most virtual classroom applications have this feature built in – however, the facilitator must know when to prompt the learners for questions, and this is where an instructional designer could do her bit for the Theorists. She can flag the locations for the facilitator.

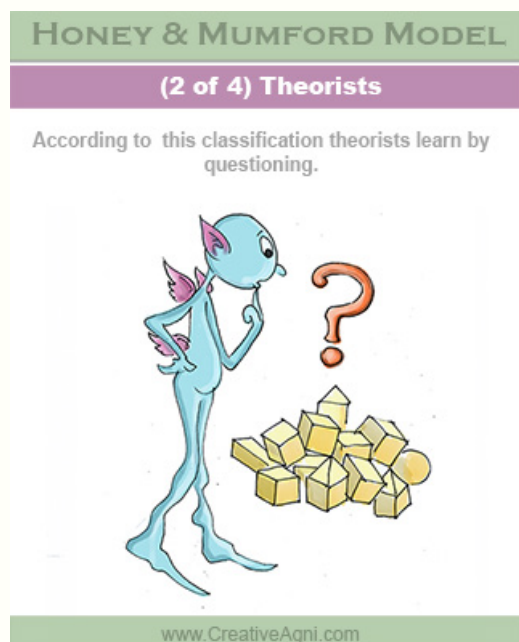
virtual classroom, here too the instructional designer must flag the locations for the trainer.

### 3. PRAGMATIST

#### Online Content

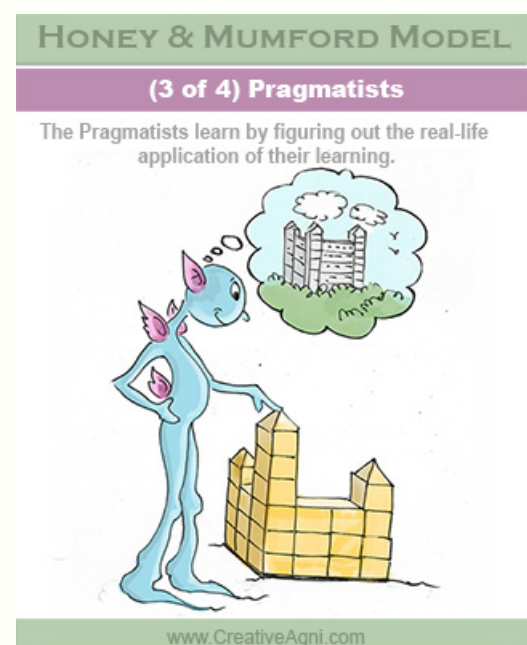
The Pragmatists thrive on real-life applications, and while it's not always possible to pluck them out of their online learning environments and take them out on a field trip (unless of course, their learning is about online content, for instance "Digital Marketing,") we can always provide them real-life examples in the following forms.

- Videos (of those who have applied the concept in real-life/of the real-life application itself.)
- Cases – text/audio formats



#### Classroom Content

In a classroom-training program, the theorist learner should be prompted to ask questions. Of course, quite like the



#### Classroom Content

While the same content could be developed for a pragmatist classroom learner, it will have to be presented/executed differently. Mostly, because of the time-constraint –

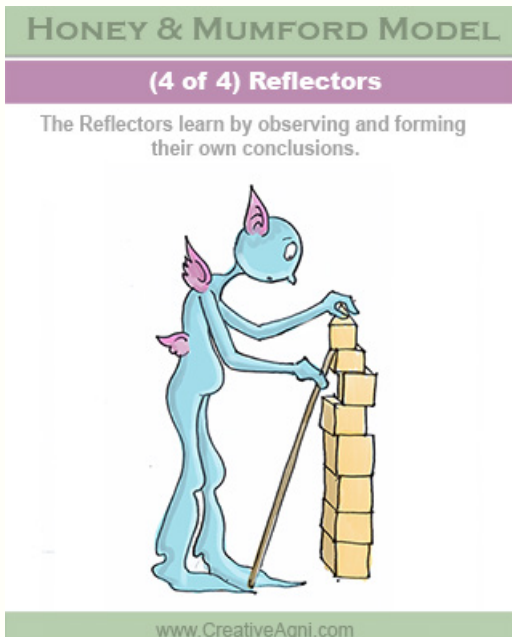
however, in classes related to cognitive disciplines (Management, Marketing, Finance, Psychology etc.) these methods have been used successfully for ages.

## 4. REFLECTOR

### Online Content

The Reflectors need time. They need to observe, reflect, and conclude. Enabling them to follow this process is quite possible in the online learning environment, mostly because the learner isn't continuously tethered to the course, as she would be in a classroom.

I'd recommend providing Reflection activities (and we had one for every competency in our online courses,) to address the need of this learner and ensure that they form their own conclusions. Here, you must include questions not answers – questions akin to the grain of sand that when planted in the belly of an oyster would over time form a pearl.



### Classroom Content

Similar questions could be asked in a classroom program. The instructional designer of a training program should include these questions in the Facilitator Notes, so that the facilitator may ask them in the class.

### Can you and should you Label your Learners?

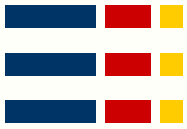
Search for "Honey Mumford Learner Types Questionnaire" and you'll find questionnaires that will help you segregate a class into learning types. If implemented with care at:

- *The beginning of an online course;* It could help you determine each learner's type, and serve activities accordingly (which obviously means that you've planned activities for each type separately.)
- *The beginning of a training session;* It could help you classify your learners and find out the tilt of your learning group. While this may help you eliminate the activities that specifically address a type that's missing and save some time, if you find a somewhat even distribution of the learner types, you won't benefit much from using the questionnaire.

### My Advice:

#### *Starting with a personal note:*

*I've designed and developed online courses and classroom programs for adult learners for a little less than two decades, but more importantly personally designed, developed, and implemented online courses in Instructional Design and Content Writing and run them for six years. I've also been conducting classroom courses and programs on ID for the last fifteen years. I'm grateful for*



the love that the participants have showered on these programs – and I believe this happened only because they were designed with love.

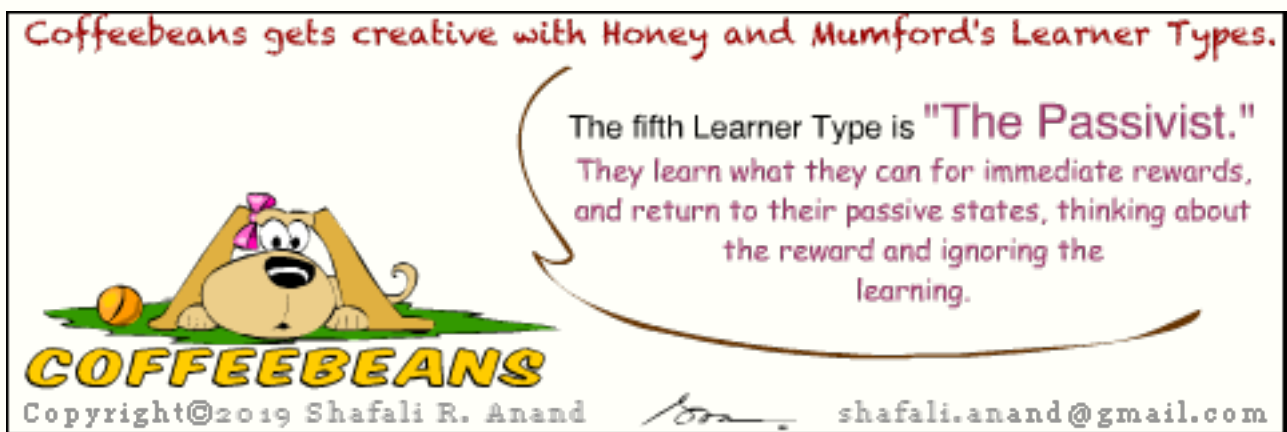
I am not going to serve you the text book definition of love, but tell you this – Love is when you understand what the other person needs, likes, dislikes, and wants – and then you do your best to ensure that those needs, likes, dislikes, and wants are addressed. In this manner, you can love your audience and then create programs for them – you’ll see that they will always be loved back.

From my own experience, I recommend that you use the Honey Mumford models quite like the Visual/Kinesthetic/Auditory classification. Address the needs of all kinds of learners and use other ID theories and models alongside Honey and Mumford’s classification, to come up with your activities. The point is – don’t miss out on addressing a specific kind. Let your content be a fair mix of content. Quite often you’ll find that your methods would depend on the Bloom’s Level of a competency, or what you intend to accomplish (learning transfer, practice, or assessment?)

Just remember the different learner types and be sensitive to their differences.  
Happy Content Creation!

Before you leave, did you know that there’s a fifth kind of learner? The Passivist!

Well, Coffeebeans appears to think so.



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