

# Understanding and Using Accessing Cues (VAK)

Our thinking patterns inform how we code our experience. As we saw in the main session the 5 senses are the gathering mechanisms of input into our brain – and here we are going to focus on the first 3 – Visual, Auditory and Kinesthetic as preferences in how we think and how we communicate. (taste and smell – if they arise, can be included in Kinesthetic for now). Let's start with an exercise. Think of **COFFEE**. What immediately comes to mind?



A cup filled with your favourite brew?



The image of the beans themselves?

**VISUAL**



The sound of the machine, or the pouring of the coffee or milk into the cup?



The whirr of the coffee grinder?

**AUDITORY**



The feeling of holding the warm cup or mug in your hands?



The feeling of warmth and taste of that first sip?



That rich delightful smell of coffee roast or brewing?

**KINESTHETIC**

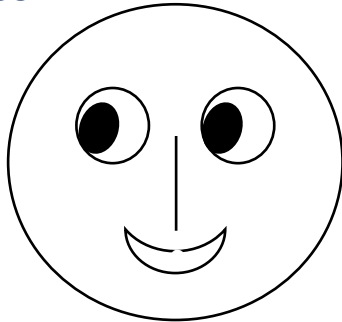
Or it could have been more than one simultaneously. However, you probably have a preference for one representational system over another. Once you become aware of these preferences in self and others you can begin to take account of them in your communication.

# Eye Movements

The cue to which representational system people use is in how the eyes move. There are a different set of eye movements when people are accessing data stored as pictures, sound or as feelings. And it is further enhanced by variations when the individual is recalling something verses when they are imagining, creating constructing or lying. We all use all three – however we do have preferences. The eye movements are access gateways to information.

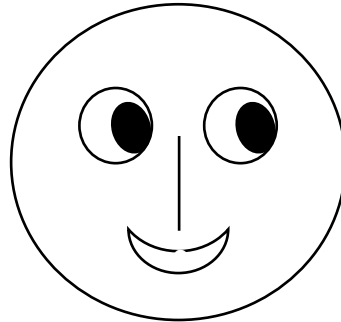
## Overview of Visual Accessing Cues for a right-handed person.

### VISUAL



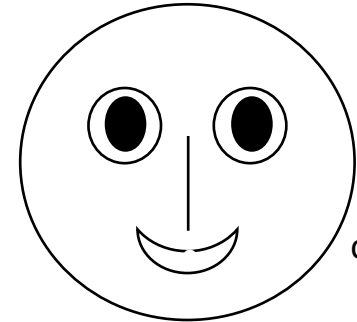
up & right  
(their right)

Constructed,  
imagined  
images



up & left  
(their left)

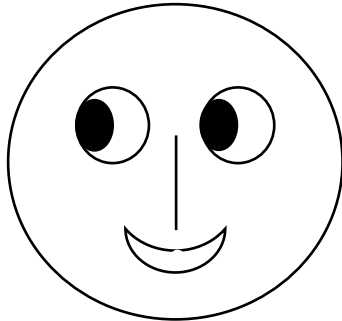
Remembered  
images



straight  
ahead &  
defocused

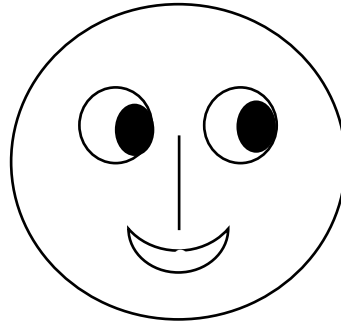
Images –  
constructed  
or  
remembered

### AUDITORY



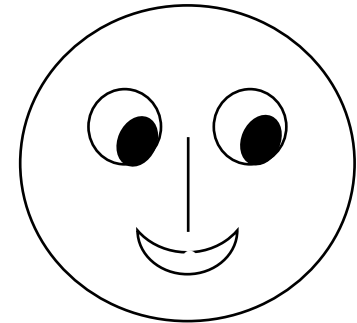
side & right  
(their right)

Constructed,  
imagined  
sounds



side & left  
(their left)

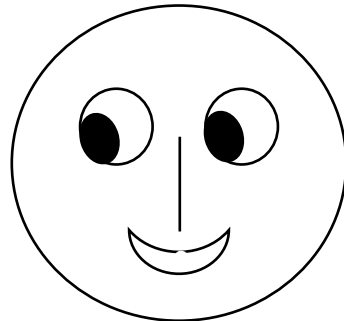
Remembered  
sounds



down &  
left (their  
left)

Internal  
Dialogue

### KINESTHETIC



down & right  
(their right)

Remembered  
feelings &  
internal  
emotions

NOTE : Left handed people may have some or all of these positions reversed. However, Visual is always UP or DEFOCUSED, Auditory is always SIDEWAYS, and FEELINGS and INTERNAL DIALOGUE is always down.

Source: Adapted from Genie Z Labordie "Influencing with Integrity"

# Visuals

There are certain external clues to those who are operating in visual mode.

**Eye Movement:** The visual person is selecting pictures from their memory to make sense of whatever is happening at the time. This happens almost instantaneously. The eyes will shoot up or in the case of some, become softly defocused and looking straight ahead at a spot about ½ metre in front of the nose. If there is anything including a person standing at that spot – it may disrupt the gaining of access to those memory images. This will create irritation – because without being able to make pictures, visual’s cannot think. When people insist on locking eyes with visuals (rather than holding ‘soft eyes’ gaze – we will discuss what this is later in the pack) this will also restrict their ability to either look up or defocus comfortably.

**Language and Voice :** The conversation of the visual will contain a predominance of visual words, and expressions such as “I see what you mean” ; “I get the picture”. they will recount colours and shapes – and are often deeply impacted by colour, order or chaos of objects in their space, and by sunsets and scenery. Visuals often breathe quite high in the chest so their voices may be high-pitched or slightly breathless. They often experience tension in the neck and shoulders, because tightening there has the effect of making the pictures clearer. Tempo is often fast.

Visuals seldom get lost. If they are a location once, they will remember that area and be able to find their way, particularly if they can begin at a familiar point of reference. They collect a lot of internal photographs and are accustomed to retrieving them. If they consider themselves good spellers – asking them to spell a difficult word will have them looking up – as they see the word in their mind’s eye – they could be creating it (to the right) and then checking it (to the left) – the eyes will move back and forth.

## Activity :

To observe this process in action. Either on yourself in the mirror or on another. To elicit visual remembered information, and accessing ‘V’, ask the following questions and forget about the answers, watch the eye movements.

1. What colour is your favourite (dog, cat, car, toy, flower, etc. )
2. What does your favourite actor look like? (describe)
3. How many apps on your phone / keys on your computer/ dials on your stove?
4. Make a picture in your mind of your living room/spouse/best friend/house etc.
5. Imagine your favourite school teacher / father / best friend with bright orange hair (assuming they didn’t in fact have orange hair)
6. .... or any other visual construct. When imagining rather than remembering – notice what happens to they eyes.

# Auditories

In western cultures, auditory is used as a primary source of information about the world less often than they use either visual or kinesthetic. Musicians are auditorys – of course so are radio DJ's or announcers.

**Eye Movement:** Auditorys only trust sound, and the sounds keep changing. The eye movements bely the fact that they are listening – as the eyes sideways as if mentally connecting to the ears. Auditorys will also often talk to themselves through internal dialogue, and can have difficulty making choices because their internal voices go around and around in discussion without knowing how to land on an actual choice. They can easily become completely stumped due to internal debate. If they could pause the internal chatter and check in on their feelings, they could use this as a secondary Rep system to check out their feelings on the matter and come to a decision. But Auditorys often don't trust their feelings. Having them look down and to the right will allow them to connect with their intuition / feelings on a potential decision. Or, by asking them to look up and to the right and make a picture of the outcome or put themselves into the image of the solution – this nexus can be broken.

**Language and Voice :** Auditorys love to talk, endlessly, are often proud of their own voices, and for good reason as they are usually quite melodious. It is important to auditorys to sound good. Their voices have a rhythm that is pleasing to themselves and others. They love language and a simple "How are you?" may elicit a reply that includes references to Marx, Plato or JFK. Auditorys tend to breathe in the middle of the chest, thus providing enough oxygen to have an even, rhythmic tempo without any jerkiness. Auditorys use phrases such as "that rings a bell" ; "I hear you" and so on. If they consider themselves good spellers – asking them to spell a difficult word will have them looking sideways – as they listen the word. Often they will break the word into its parts (phonetically) and once again we may see the eyes swapping from the right to the left side as they listen to the sound of the word and compare it to what is stored in their memory.

If Auditorys are experiencing a lot of discord in their lives, they will immerse themselves in music or go to a musical or a symphony.

## Activity :

To observe this process in action. Either on yourself in the mirror or on another. To elicit auditory remembered information, and accessing 'A', ask the following questions and forget about the answers, watch the eye movements.

1. Ask them to recall someone who has a very quiet voice when they are speaking. Then ask them to give the voice a different accent (French, Italian, Scottish for example). Then ask them to make the voice loud and booming – making sure you return the memory to its original softness before finishing. You can play around with a lot of sound effects.
2. Ask them to think of someone that irritates them or that they dislike. Have them hear their voice and the get them to change that voice to sound like bugs bunny. Ask them what impact that has? (Often something unpleasant can become amusing just by shifting the nature of the voice)

# Kinesthetics

Kinesthetics often include those who use their bodies such as sportspeople, yoga instructors, dancers and those who are empaths. They favour their somatic experience as their information source.

**Eye Movement:** Often those who have a primary Rep system which is visual or auditory will use the kinesthetic as a double check. Accessing intuition involves the body felt sense. Kinesthetics like to get in touch with what is happening – physically and emotionally and this is seen when the eyes go down and to the right. Their emotional responses will often trigger a bodily experience, such as heart break resulting in an actual physical aching heart ; or nervousness creating nausea.

**Language and Voice :** Kinesthetics tend to have spaces and pauses in their conversation. This gives them time to check out their feelings, centre themselves into their body response. They get a ‘feel’ for a problem, they say things like “I sense that ...” ; “My feeling is that ..” “I grasp what you mean” and like to remove stumbling blocks and untangle the knots – these are action oriented terms. They like or hate, feel warm, cold or lukewarm about almost everything. They breathe deep down in the belly and their voices are deeper, and often sensual in nature.

## Activity :

To observe this process in action. Either on yourself in the mirror or on another. To elicit kinesthetic remembered information, and accessing ‘K’, ask the following questions and forget about the answers, watch the eye movements.

1. Ask them to recall the feeling of different textures against their skin (eg. silk, rough wool, heavy coat etc. )
2. Ask them to think of a time when they felt joy. Find out what that feels like to them – where exactly in the body is it experienced? Dial up the intensity of the feeling – make it bigger and bigger (what happens) make it less – see if they can dial it up and then down through choice. Remember to return the feeling to it’s original state.
3. Ask them to describe the climate around them – temperature, humidity, air flow.
4. Ask them to focus on a time they felt extremely confident, happy or certain. (You may use the process of anchoring – later in the session to enable them to recall these feelings at will)

# Using VAK in our Communication (1 of 5)

All of us will have a primary mode that we favour, as one door to our perceptions, and a second on occasion. Usually the third stays closed to us. One way to enrich not only our life but to gain access to a greater range of information is to work to open that third door and to build our engagement with the second. This will add a whole new channel of information to daily life. And if we can easily move from one perceptual door to another then decisions can be based on various types of data. (new pictures, stored pictures, new sounds, old sounds, new feelings and old feelings). Opening the new door and strengthening the secondary one, also interrupts the customary patterns of information gathering – through expanded sensory awareness.

## Matching Representational Systems

We live in a world of many separate and also related objects and people. None of us operates directly with that world but through our 5 senses via the conscious and unconscious minds. The senses enable the coding or representation of the real world in our brain and it is this that determines how we act. These maps are not the same as what they represent – but we use them to make meaning of the real world through our thinking. It is the thinking that produces the words that provide insight into the flavour of an individual's representation system.

Communication becomes easier if the Mentor is able to translate his or her speech into the favourite familiar representational system of their Mentee. This is because the information slides comfortably into the brain without the need to be translated for comprehension.

### Reflect for a Moment:

- Think of a person with whom you are at ease immediately and is also at ease with you. (You may find that you have an operating system in common)
- Think now of a person with whom you seem to have continual conflicts. (It might be that you are both viewing the situation or relationship from different Rep systems)

So, when speaking with another, notice the eye movements. Up or defocused is for pictures. Down and to the right (in a right handed person) is for feelings and anywhere else is for sound. Next, begin to listen for the words and phrases – “I see what you mean” will be a visual statement. “I hear you” or “That rings a bell” can clearly be heard as an auditory and “I’m feeling pumped about this” will be the response from a kinesthetic. Once you have determined their Rep system, the next step is to translate your own Rep system (if it is different from theirs) into a way of perceiving into their world.

If you are able to choose your own words to match those of the other's favourite system he/she will find the words meaningful. And, there will be less chance of misunderstandings or conflict. On the next page is a listing of the kinds of words you will experience with each of the three representational systems



# Using VAK in our Communication (2 of 5)

Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic
Picture	Tune	Touch
Clear	Note	Handle
Focus	Accent	Throw
Perspective	Ring	Finger
See	Shout	Shock
Flash	Growl	Stir
Bright	Tone	Strike
Outlook	Sing	Impress
Spectacle	Sound	Move
Glimpse	Hear	Hit
Preview	Clear	Grope
Shortsighted	Say	Impact
Discern	Scream	Stroke
Distinguish	Click	Tap
Illustrate	Static	Rub
Delineate	Noise	Crash
Paint	Rattle	Smash
Cloud	Ask	Sharpen
Clarify	Chord	Tangible
Graphic	Amplify	Crawl
Dress up	Harmonise	Irritate
Show	Key	Tickle
Reveal	Muffle	Sore
Expose	Voice	Grab
Depict	Compose	Carry
Screen	Alarm	Flat
	Screech	

## Examples of Translations between Rep Systems

**Example:** My future looks hazy.

**Match:**

**Visual:** When I look into my future – its not clear.

**Translate:**

**Auditory:** I can't tune into my future.

**Kinesthetic:** I can't get a sense for what is going to happen.

**Example:** My boss doesn't listen to me

**Match:**

**Auditory:** My boss seems to go deaf when I speak

**Translate:**

**Visual:** My boss never sees me, even when I'm right there in the room

**Kinesthetic:** I get the feeling that my boss doesn't even know I exist

**Example:** Mary got really churned up on Monday when the report was due

**Match:**

**Kinesthetic :** Mary was nervous and agitated on Monday because of the report being due

**Translate:**

**Visual:** Mary was able to focus on Monday due to the report being due

**Kinesthetic:** Mary got caught up in a lot of static on Monday because of the report being due

NOTE : On the next page we will provide you with the opportunity to do some example translations for yourself. However, you might want to jump ahead four pages and complete a questionnaire that will identify your preferred pattern, and then come back to the examples.

# Using VAK in our Communication (3 of 5)

## Practice Examples for Translating between Rep Systems : Visual

Visual	Visual Match	Translate Auditory	Translate Kinesthetic
Things are a bit hazy			
I take a dim view of that			
The future is looking brighter			
The outlook is bleak			
Seeing things through rose coloured glasses			
He's in a black mood today			
We're in the pink			
I look forward to seeing you			
Things are looking up			
We've a clear way forward			
That was a colourful expression			



# Using VAK in our Communication (4 of 5)

## Practice Examples for Translating between Rep Systems : Auditory

Auditory	Auditory Match	Translate Kinesthetic	Translate Visual
I tell myself to take care			
I 'm glad to hear that			
Tell me how things are going			
My teeth are chattering			
Things just clicked into place			
Let me explain			
We're in harmony on this one			
Listen to yourself !			
We're in tune with each other			
It was music to my ears			
I'm pleased to hear you say that			

# Using VAK in our Communication (6 of 5)

## Practice Examples for Translating between Rep Systems : Kinesthetic

Kinesthetic	Kinesthetic Match	Translate Visual	Translate Auditory
Racked with pain			
The sweet smell of success			
Get in touch with reality			
A taste of fear			
I've got a handle on this one			
Warm regards			
I'm not getting a grasp of this			
I was deeply moved			
It was a real blow to my pride			
Let's firm this up			
I savoured the moment			
Hold on, I'm coming			

# Identify your Preferred Representational System

Source: Adapted from NLP at work – Sue Knight”

For each of the following questions, think about the item, person or place being described and choose which elements come immediately to mind.

<b>1</b>	<b>Petrol</b>
a.	Image of some sort, eg. a car, a petrol station
b.	A sound, eg. the sound of petrol being poured into the tank, sound of an explosion
c.	A touch, eg. the feel of the pump handle
d.	A smell, eg. the smell of petrol
e.	A taste, eg. the taste of petrol ( assuming you know)
<b>3</b>	<b>The way you would most like to spend your time</b>
a.	The sounds associated with doing this, eg. people’s voices or the environment
b.	A taste, eg. of a particular food
c.	A smell, eg. the aroma of the environment
d.	An image, eg. where you would be or who you would be with
e.	A touch or an emotion, eg. how you feel when you think of spending time this way
<b>5</b>	<b>A time you didn’t enjoy much</b>
a.	A smell, eg. aroma
b.	A sound, eg. what you heard or what you were saying to yourself
c.	A taste
d.	An image, eg. of what was happening or what you could imagine
e.	A touch, eg. the feel of something, or an emotion – how you felt at the time

<b>2</b>	<b>Your best friend</b>
a.	A sound, eg. the sound of their voice
b.	An emotion, eg. your feelings toward them
c.	A smell, eg. the smell of their perfume or aftershave
d.	A taste, eg. the taste of a meal you once ate with them
e.	An image, eg. what they look like or a place you have been with them
<b>4</b>	<b>What you did yesterday</b>
a.	A taste, eg. a meal you ate
b.	An image or picture, eg. a scene from where you were at
c.	A sound or perhaps some conversation you recall
d.	A touch, sensation or emotion
e.	A smell, eg. something in the environment
<b>6</b>	<b>Your favourite restaurant</b>
a.	A touch or emotion, eg. how you feel when you are there
b.	An image or picture, eg. the people you are with or the surroundings
c.	What you hear, eg. the conversation or music
d.	A taste, eg. your favourite dish
e.	A smell, eg. the aroma from the kitchen

# Identify your Preferred Representational System

Source: Adapted from NLP at work – Sue Knight”

<b>7</b>	<b>Something from your early childhood</b>
a.	A smell, aroma or perfume
b.	A touch or emotion
c.	An image
d.	The sound of voices
e.	A taste
<b>9</b>	<b>Where you might be tomorrow</b>
a.	An image or picture
b.	An emotion or physical sensation
c.	A taste
d.	A smell or aroma
e.	A sound or noise
<b>11</b>	<b>Something you find rewarding</b>
a.	An emotion, eg, feeling of satisfaction or touch eg. physical sensation of a sport
b.	A taste
c.	A smell
d.	A sound, eg. what you say to yourself or the sounds of voices around you
e.	An image, eg. what it looks like

<b>8</b>	<b>Your work</b>
a.	A sound, eg. of equipment or the people you work with
b.	An image, eg. the picture of what you do
c.	A taste
d.	A smell, eg. of your surroundings
e.	A touch or an emotion, eg. the texture of what you can feel or how you feel about the work
<b>10</b>	<b>Something you find difficult to do</b>
a.	An image or picture
b.	A taste
c.	A sound or inner conversation with yourself
d.	An associated emotion or touch
e.	A smell
<b>12</b>	<b>Something you find amusing</b>
a.	A sound, eg. what someone says or what you hear
b.	An image or picture, eg. someone or something you see
c.	An emotion eg. the sensation of amusement or a physical touch eg. the feel of something
d.	A taste
e.	A smell,

# Identify your Preferred Representational System

Highlight the letters you ticked for each answer. Then add up the number of letters circled in each column. The scores indicate your preferences / thinking patterns. The higher the score the more likely you are to process information, access information and communicate in this modality. There are no right answers.

	Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic	Gustatory	Olfactory
1	a	b	c	e	d
2	e	a	b	d	c
3	d	A	E	B	c
4	b	c	d	a	e
5	d	b	e	c	a
6	b	c	a	d	e
7	c	d	b	e	a
8	b	a	e	c	d
9	a	e	b	c	d
10	a	c	d	b	e
11	e	d	a	b	c
12	b	a	c	d	e

Depending on the priority of your representation systems and how they operate – it is a useful activity to start to consciously notice when communication issues arise and what Rep system the other is using. And spend some time matching your language to there's. Later in this session we will cover such aspects as Rapport and Matching and Pacing – both of which utilize this principle. To return to the main session click on the complete button.