

## Is there a simple answer?

### **My tutorial group is arguing about the presentation we have to do next week**

- What are you arguing about?
- Half the group thinks that we should be describing all the different complex options and the other half want to agree on THE answer. Like there is one answer!
- Is there an answer to the problem?
- I don't think so. I think that is the whole point of the presentations as a group that we should represent different perspectives.
- I don't think there is a perfect solution but some of the group think we will fail the presentation if we do not agree on a final answer.
- In our group, everyone has a different version of the conclusion and so we are all going to share that at the end. Our tutor really likes that approach and we are going to ask the class to vote on our solutions.

*In some subjects it seems as though there are very definite right and wrong answers. But in some subjects there are not definite answers, only opinions and conjecture. It is natural that many students want to find the answer their tutor appears to have, but often this answer does not exist and students can be confused about what is expected of them. Group work can make this even more complex and challenging. The task needs to be made very clear and the scope for disagreement outlined at the outset.*

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### **I am finding the complexity of the methods and rules we learn really difficult. Are you?**

- You mean in statistics?
- Well a lot of it is in accounting and economics where we have to learn certain formulae. But generally I like to know the right answer and then know how we got there. I don't like the way Doctor Jones makes us work towards a solution. I feel like I'm lost in the dark.
- I have Miss Ashti, she explains the answer first and then we go through five or six steps to get there. I like that.
- I think I would prefer that. I think I understand things better when I can see where I am going.
- You should ask to see Doctor Jones and tell him. Maybe it is just his style.

*Some students like to see the big picture and then explore the detail. Others like to build up a picture based on details. Each student and each teacher will have a personal preference. Some people like to explore complexity and develop an idea of broad simple concepts and ideas. Others like to do it the other way around.*

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**I am finding this class really hard. I like to learn one thing at a time!**

- What is happening in class? Is this your class with Paul Thibo?
- Yes. He is great and I really like him but he makes everything 'interconnected', that's his favourite word! Everything is connected to everything else.
- But that's right isn't it. Everything is complicated.
- Maybe. But when I am learning I like to understand one thing at a time. I like to learn one fact at a time.
- I know what you mean but I think that the facts we are learning are all so contextual. You know they rely on the context. You cant understand x without knowing about y and z as well. The facts are interconnected.
- I know but my brain doesn't work that way. I can explain the connections but I find it hard to learn about them that way!

*Learning about things sequentially is how most of us prefer to learn. We learn one fact and then build on that knowledge with more facts. But not everybody learns the same way. Some people like to have lots of facts and then find connections between them. Your learning approach will dictate what you find 'suits you' in different classes.*

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