

HAND DOMINANCE CRITERIA

Suggestions of Evidence a Person is Left or Right Handed

Shelly Weaverdyck

Here are **seven tasks** you can watch a person perform to help discern whether this person is right or left handed. These might be especially helpful with a person who has many **cognitive needs**.

Sometimes hand dominance is not very obvious. For example, this person may have physical discomfort, weakness, or other limitations that might reduce the use of one hand. Someone who has known this person throughout their life might be a good source of information, particularly if this person was born with a different hand dominance for some tasks than they now show. Sometimes children were required to change hand dominance for social preferences, an injury prevented them from using their dominant hand, or they have always used both hands equally easily.

Make sure **both** of this person's **hands** are **equally free** and not restrained or behind a barrier, such as a table, in any way. **Note the hand this person uses** when you do the following. If it is very clear which hand they consistently use, then do only #1-3 and #7. If there is doubt, then do all seven of the tasks.

1. **See them perform tasks** on their own throughout the day. Focus especially on eating, picking things up off of a table, and wiping the table.
2. Stand or sit directly in front of a person. Get their attention. Silently with both of your hands hold a pencil out to them to the center of their body and in front of them. Watch them as they **take the pencil**. If they don't take the pencil, ask them to take it.
3. Stand or sit directly in front of this person. Place a blank paper vertically and flat on the table directly centered in front of them and place a **pencil vertically in the middle of the paper** in front of them. Ask them to "**Please sign your name**". If you still aren't sure, ask them to write "The grass is green".
4. Stand or sit directly in front of this person. Place a bowl of ice cream directly centered in front of them on a table. With both of your hands **hold a spoon** out to them to the center of their body and in front of them. **Watch them eat** it for a full minute to see which hand(s) they use.
5. Stand or sit directly in front of this person. Place a **ball** directly centered in front of them and ask them to **throw it**.
6. Stand or sit directly in front of this person. Ask them to **rub their nose**. Do not demonstrate or gesture.
7. If this person can answer questions accurately, ask them "**What hand do you use to eat?**", "**What hand do you use to write?**", "**Have you always been right (or left) handed** ever since you were born?".