

HAND DOMINANCE CRITERIA

Suggestions of Evidence a Person with Cognitive Impairment is Left or Right handed

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Here are seven tasks you as a caregiver can watch a person with cognitive impairment perform to help discern whether this person is right or left handed. Sometimes hand dominance is not very obvious. For example, they 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 a person's hands are equally free and not restrained or behind a barrier, such as a table, in any way. Note the hand a 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 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 a 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 a person. Place a bowl of ice cream directly centered in front of them on a table. With both 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 a person. Place a ball directly centered in front of them and ask them to throw it.
6. Stand or sit directly in front of a person. Ask them to rub their nose. Do not demonstrate or gesture.
7. If they 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?".