



Supporting Children Who are Left-Handed

The practice of forcing children to use their right hand and disciplining them for using their left hand has largely disappeared (thankfully!). However, we still live in a right-handed world, so young children who are developing a preference for their left hand need support that encourages rather than hinders them.

Facts about Left-Handedness

- About 10% of the population is left-handed; this percentage hasn't changed for many years.
- By 18 months, children show a hand preference; by age 3, their hand preference is fairly well-established.
- The negative attitude toward left-handedness in the past is reflected in language: a "left-handed compliment" is one that is only partly sincere; "coming out of left field" refers to something unexpected, off-kilter or odd; the French word for left, "gauche," is often used to describe social awkwardness.
- Several U.S. presidents have been left-handed (Gerald Ford, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama).

continued on back page



Advantages to being left-handed

- There's a whole day devoted to being a left-hander: August 13!
- Lefties have a greater chance of being a genius or having a high IQ.
- Left-handed people can see more easily underwater.
- Lefties are better able to do more than one thing at a time (to multi-task).
- Being left-handed is an advantage in some sports, including baseball and tennis.
- Some lefties have better memories.
- Provide left-handed equipment, such as scissors, computer mouse.
- Teach the child to hold writing instruments correctly for left-handers.
- Teach skills like tying shoes by doing it in front of a mirror so the child can see how it's done.

Tips for parents and teachers

- Allow children to use the hand of their choice, including switching hands depending on the activity. Don't try to force them to become right-handed.
- Try to avoid consciously or unconsciously encouraging the use of the right hand.

R E S O U R C E S

Website for Left-handers www.lefthandersday.com and handedness.org

Raising a Left-Handed Child in a Right-Handed World. Parents Magazine.
<http://bit.ly/2k198U2>

On the Left Hand, There Are No Easy Answers by Perri Klass, M.D., New York Times. www.nytimes.com/2011/03/08/health/views/08klass.html

Programs and families can contact the program leadership directly at PAIECMH@pakeys.org with questions or concerns.

