

HAND DOMINANCE

Hand dominance simply refers to the fact that most children gravitate toward one hand or the other as their “strong” hand that is better at performing complex tasks like handwriting, picking up small objects, or using a utensils. Children generally start showing a hand preference between 3-5 years of age. Parents and teachers should be cautioned about thinking of a child as ambidextrous if they have not established a hand dominance by age 5. Being ambidextrous is extremely rare and there is typically a reason that kids aren’t finding their own dominant hand. Decreased strength and/or difficulty crossing midline are often causes for delayed development of hand dominance. We do not force children to use a specific hand.

Activities to Encourage Hand Dominance

- During any activity, place items (i.e. crayons, pencils, eating utensils, puzzle pieces, toys...) in front at the middle of the student’s body and let them choose which hand to use. Once your student initiates an activity with that hand, he/she must **complete** that activity with the chosen hand. If he/she chooses the other hand for the **next** activity, that is fine. We are not forcing a hand dominance, but we are encouraging development of strength and endurance within his/her chosen hand.
- Activities that require 2 hands to work together. One hand holds (stabilizes) the piece and the other hand manipulates (“works) the toy/object.
 - Stirring, pouring, scooping, coloring, cutting, lacing activities, peeling off stickers, clip or clothespins.
- Screwing lids on/off jars/bottles. Use different sizes to strengthen larger muscles in the hand and fingers.
- Play with toys that require 2 hands (ie: wind up toys, jack in the box).
- Practice/play with household tools. Use tongs, tweezers, strawberry hullers, clothespins, or pickle fork to pick up objects.
- Play dough – roll it, flatten it. Also, can use tools such as cookie cutters, safety scissors, utensils, etc... with play dough.
- Mr. Potato Head. One hand must stabilize the “potato” while the more skilled hand will place the pieces into the holes.