

## **Activities to Encourage Hand Dominance**

Any activity that encourages the different movements of each hand will encourage the development of hand dominance. These activities should be repeated over time to provide practice and to help the child develop his or her skills sufficiently to develop an awareness of which hand is more skilled. These activities make the child decide on which hand to use to do the activity and which hand assists or holds.

1. Screwing lids on and off jars, screwing pipe fittings together, assembling nuts and bolts. To add interest to screwing lids off, hide small objects or stickers inside for the child to "discover".
  2. Large Legos (Duplos) or other building type toys - one hand must hold while the other manipulates the piece into position.
  3. Pushing a car or train around a track. You can draw a pathway or "streets" on a long piece of paper. This works wonderfully, because as the child moves the car, he ends up crawling and naturally stabilizing his weight on the non-dominant hand.
  4. Tool use such as hammering or using a screwdriver. Children's toy workbenches are great and safe way for children to practice their manipulative skills.
  5. Household tools such as tongs, large tweezers, a strawberry huller or clothes pin to pick up objects. A kitchen tool called a pickle fork to pick up pom-poms works beautifully to force that decision on which hand to use and children love playing with it!!
  6. Scooping beans, salt, or noodles with a spoon into containers. Try both hands, watching to see which one is more skilled.
  7. "Pick-up games" Use pennies, buttons, beans, skewers cut into one inch lengths or other small items which require use of a refined pincer grasp (ie. holding the item between the pad of the index finger and pad of the thumb). Then try putting the items into a small hole or slot cut in the lid of a yogurt container. Alternate hands doing the task and watch the quality of movement.
  8. Encourage coloring on small pieces of paper. One hand has to stabilize the paper or it slips all around.
  9. Ball Play Try to provide opportunities for the child to practice his/her ball skills. Try rolling balls, catching, tossing balls into a container. Be sure to start with a ball large enough that the child feels comfortable with and moving smaller as his/her skills progress. You may also try these activities with beanbags. In using large balls, children learn to use their hands symmetrically, working together. Smaller balls will elicit more of one hand emerging as the dominant one. Positioning the container higher up in relation to the child helps to encourage extension of the wrist with pronation (palms down position) of the hand.
  10. Lacing cards: hand sewing encourages the use of a dominant hand. Lacing cards can be made of thin cardboard with a hole punch. Use long shoelaces, or yarn with the end stiffened with tape or blunt tapestry needles and yarn. Burlap can also be stitched without punching holes.
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