



Right? or Left?



photo by Physalis

Mini Fact:
In some cultures, it's thought to be impolite to eat with the left hand.

Which hand do you like to write with? Which hand do you use to pitch a baseball or brush your teeth?

Do you choose the same hand for all your activities? Or do you use your right hand sometimes and your left hand at other times?

Most people find it easier to use their right hands. Experts don't know exact numbers, but they believe that about 90 percent of people are right-handed.

People who are equally skilled with both hands are called **ambidextrous** (am-bih-DEK-strus).

No one really knows what causes left- or right-handedness. Experts say the difference in handedness is as natural as which color eyes you have.

Lefty struggles

Because most people are right-handed, left-handers can have a hard time doing daily tasks. Many products are made for right-handed people.

Think about a school desk that has an attached seat. The arm rest is usually on the right side. Other ordinary things that must be made differently for left-handed people include:



Stringed instruments



Scissors

Today, left-handed people can usually find tools, sports equipment and musical instruments made especially for them.

Lefty advantages

On the other hand, in sports where players on different teams face each other, left-handed or left-footed athletes often have an advantage. Other players may not know how to play against someone shooting or kicking from the left.

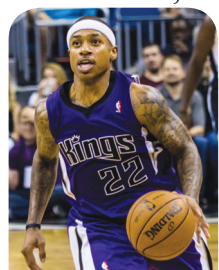


photo by Michael Tipton

Isaiah Thomas, who now plays for the Los Angeles Lakers, is left-handed.

In baseball, left-handed batters and pitchers can have an advantage because of their position on the field and because opponents don't see as many left-handers. The same is true for left-handed tennis players and boxers, experts say.

Handy fact-a-roonies

- The wedding ring is traditionally worn on the left hand on the ring finger, the third finger from the thumb.
- When witnesses take an oath, they raise their right hand.
- Do you know which handle to turn if you want cold water? In America, the cold water knob is usually on the right. The hot water knob is on the left.



Famous lefties

• Artist and inventor Leonardo da Vinci was well known in his time for being left-handed.

Experts today can see the left-handed brushstrokes in his art. His left-handedness is especially well known because of his "mirror writing." When he wrote notes to himself, he wrote backward from the usual way people write. People could read it only by holding it up to a mirror so they could see it in reverse.



• We have had several left-handed presidents, including three who are still living:



photo: courtesy Obama White House Archives

George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama.

• Television star and business owner Oprah Winfrey is also a "southpaw."



photo by Greg Hernandez

• Albert Einstein, the scientist who changed the world's ideas about time and space, was left-handed.

Resources



On the Web:
• bit.ly/MPlefty

Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of handedness are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:



- ADVANTAGE,
- AMBIDEXTROUS,
- ATHLETES, BUSH,
- CHALLENGE, CLINTON,
- DA VINCI, EINSTEIN,
- HANDEDNESS,
- INSTRUMENT, LEFT,
- NATURAL, OATH, OBAMA,
- OPRAH, RIGHT, SCISSORS,
- SKILL, SPORTS, TOOLS.

I	N	E	G	N	E	L	L	A	H	C	O	A	T	H
N	J	N	S	U	O	R	T	X	E	D	I	B	M	A
S	S	U	A	T	H	L	E	T	E	S	K	U	N	N
T	C	B	U	S	H	A	G	T	H	G	I	R	O	D
R	I	L	E	F	T	L	S	L	O	O	T	S	T	E
U	S	O	P	R	A	H	L	A	R	U	T	A	N	D
M	S	S	K	I	L	L	O	B	A	M	A	I	N	
E	O	M	N	I	E	T	S	N	I	E	G	V	L	E
N	R	A	D	V	A	N	T	A	G	E	O	X	C	S
T	S	D	A	V	I	N	C	I	S	T	R	O	P	S

Cook's Corner

Sesame Noodles

You'll need:

- 1 (8-ounce) package linguine
- 2 tablespoons sesame oil
- pinch of pepper

For the sauce:

- 1 tablespoon white vinegar

- 1/4 cup soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon chili oil (or a peppery oil)
- 2 tablespoons sesame oil



* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

What to do:

1. Cook noodles according to package directions. Drain in a colander and run cold water over cooked noodles.
2. Drain again and add 2 tablespoons sesame oil. Coat well. Refrigerate for 1 hour to chill.
3. In a separate bowl, combine ingredients for the sauce. Just before serving, pour sauce over noodles and toss to coat. Top with a dash of pepper. Keep refrigerated. Makes 4 servings.

7 Little Words for Kids

Use the letters in the boxes to make a word with the same meaning as the clue. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in the solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.



1. clothes fastener with teeth (6) _____
2. prize (5) _____
3. piece of lumber (5) _____
4. go on (8) _____
5. not one person (6) _____
6. number of eggs in a carton (5) _____
7. correct (6) _____

ARD	TIN	EN	PER
PR	BO	ODY	ARD
NOB	CON	ZIP	OP
UE	ER	DOZ	AW

Answers: zipper, award, board, continue, nobody, dozen, proper.

Mini Jokes



Ralph: What is a turtle's motto?

Liam: "All's shell that ends shell!"

Eco Note



Extreme weather can be trouble for birds. Scientists have noticed that when extreme weather happens, fewer birds show up in the places they call home. Why? One idea is that the birds avoid the extreme weather by moving to a friendlier area. Scientists have just begun to use satellites to figure out what happens to birds during extreme weather. If birds are moving to other areas because of climate change, they may need our help. We may need to protect their new habitats.

adapted from climatekids.nasa.gov

For later:

Take a survey in your classroom. How many students are right-handed, and how many are left-handed?

Teachers: For standards-based activities to accompany this feature, visit: bit.ly/MPstandards. And follow The Mini Page on Facebook!



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