

Dominance



It is hoped that as children arrive into pre primary they are beginning to show a preference for one hand over the other across a range of activities.

Research in the area suggests that the majority of children show a preference by 3 years and most by school age, however some actually establish dominance as late as 8 or 9 years old. Making a preference is important as it allows the child to develop skill and endurance with that hand.

If a child has not yet made a preference it is suggested that the child is encouraged to participate in activities that involve crossing the midline, and activities using both hands together, some where both are active and others where one hand does the work and the other helps. Don't try and choose the hand, although you can observe to see which you think is used most often or is more skillful. Please see 'Observation Checklist for Preference' below. It also may be useful to refer the child to an Occupational Therapist for further assessment, prior to entry into year one.

Midline Crossing Activities

Midline activities are those where children cross their body with their hand and arm e.g. the left hand moves across the body to the right hand side, or the right hand moves across the body to the left hand side.

Activities may involve

- reaching across the body to retrieve an object, or
- placing, or throwing an object across the body
- moving the hand and arm in patterns that cross the body

The child should be encouraged to complete the activities with both left and right hands.

Bilateral Activities

Bilateral activities are those that involve both hands together.

Initially encourage use of both hands together in a simple movement which require both hands to perform the same action.

- throwing/bouncing/catching ball with two hands
- spinning two hoops one on each arm
- using socks with balls in each toe. the child stands with their back to wall, cross body and bounce the ball on the wall
- drawing circles simultaneously on board
- making circles with arms, holding streamers
- passing object over and under body
- swinging and hanging on monkey bars
- rolling out playdough with a rolling pin
- making a playdough snake using two hands
- marching to music
- walking on stilts
- 'Simon says' with movements that involve crossing the body
- stencils/drawing around hands
- animal walks (see examples in glossary)
- carpet feet cross feet
- playing Twister
- forward rolls and holding ball in feet

Graduate to using hands in co-operation where hands are doing different movements. When the child has lots of time using one hand to do the work and the other to do the holding, they will decide eventually which is the best hand to use.

- Cutting
- Colouring
- Cooking mixing, cutting
- Threading
- Hammering
- Nuts and bolts
- Bat and ball

See over for an observation checklist for hand preference.

Dominance: Observation Checklist for Hand Preference

It is best to observe the child over several occasions. Ensure that the items for use are placed in a variety of positions e.g. left of child, right of child and in the midline. Observe which hand the child picks up with, and then which they use to complete the task. It is also helpful to monitor which grasp they use and how skillfully they complete the task.

Name: _____

Age: _____ Date: _____

Task: Hammering (Use a child sized hammer.)

Hammer located Midline L R _____

Hand used to pick up L R _____

Hand used to hammer L R _____

Observations: include grasp, swapping, fatigue, accuracy, skill, stabilizing with other hand. _____



Task: Colouring (Regular colouring activities, colouring activity on very small piece of paper.)

Pencil/Crayon located Midline L R _____

Hand used to pick up L R _____

Hand used to colour L R _____

Observations: include grasp, swapping, fatigue, accuracy, skill, stabilizing with other hand. _____



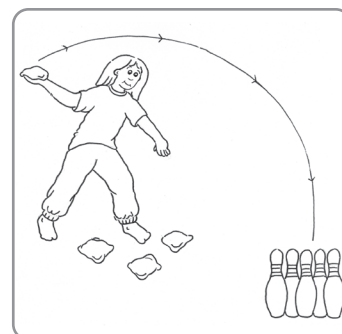
Task: Throwing with one hand (Use beanbags, into bucket or at a target.)

Bean bag located Midline L R _____

Hand used to pick up L R _____

Hand used to throw L R _____

Observations: include grasp, swapping, fatigue, accuracy, skill, stabilizing with other hand. _____



Task: Threading (Beads on string.)

String located Midline L R _____

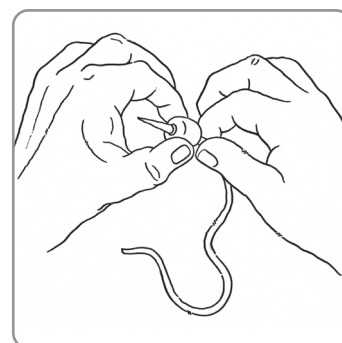
Hand used to pick up string L R _____

Hand used to hold string to thread L R _____

Beads located Midline L R _____

Hand used to thread beads L R _____

Observations: include grasp, swapping, fatigue, accuracy, skill, stabilizing with other hand. _____



Task: Cutting (Use child scissors and simple cutting task.)

Scissors located Midline L R _____

Hand used to pick up scissors L R _____

Hand used to cut with scissors L R _____

Observations: include grasp, swapping, fatigue, accuracy, skill, stabilizing with other hand. _____

