



Handedness - Why are people right and left handed?

Fact

- There are no definite answers to why some people are left handed and some are right but there are some theories.
- One theory (or educated guess) is that centuries ago, when battles were fought using swords and shields, right handed people were more likely to survive than left handed. This was because right handed fighters held their shield in their left hand to protect their heart from their opponents sword (your heart is slightly to the left in your chest). Fighters who fought with their left hand exposed their heart and were more likely to die.
- Some believe more people are born left handed but because there are more right handed people they are only shown how to do things right handedly.
- Despite all these theories, scientists are pretty sure that being right or left handed is decided before you are born.

Do you know

- Your brain is divided into two sides, called the right and left hemispheres. The right hemisphere controls the left side of your body, while the left hemisphere controls the right side of your body.
- If you are right handed then the left side of your brain is stronger (dominant). But left handed people have a stronger right side of the brain.
- Research shows that about one in 10 people is left handed.
- Nine out of ten babies suck their right thumb while they're in their mother's uterus, and about nine out of every ten people are right handed once they're born.
- People that can use both their right and left hand are called Ambidextrous. (am-bee-dex-truss)

Experiments you can do

Next time you're playing with a ball, brushing your teeth, buttering bread, even just going for a walk, take a note of which hand or foot you like to use first.

Then try doing those same things with your other hand. What does it feel like? Are you as good at doing those things with your other hand?

Who in your family is left handed and who is right handed?

Other Investigations

Ever get confused about which hand is which? Hold up your hands, so that your fingers are out straight, and held together. Move your thumb out so that it points away from your fingers. Your left hand makes an "L" shape, for left.

Jokes

What do you call someone with two left feet? Anything you like ... they can only run around in circles!

What about someone with two right feet? Anything you like ... they can only run around in circles too!