



Jigsaw Therapy Services

Multi-disciplinary Training, Consultation and Therapy Services

Activities to support development of a clear Hand dominance

Development of hand preference or dominance can occur from an early age and is usually established between 3-4yrs. This means one hand consistently acts as the 'doer' hand while the other hand acts as the 'helper' hand. Some children may not demonstrate hand dominance until about 7yrs, and may swap hands during school tasks e.g. writing, drawing, using scissors.

Why is hand dominance important?

- Children need a more skilled 'doer' hand and a supporting 'helping' hand.
- The 'doer' hand becomes better at fine finger and hand movements, co-ordination and at using scissors, pencils etc.
- The 'helping' hand becomes stronger and develops skills for stabilising or holding objects so that the 'doer' hand can work more efficiently.
- This leads to better co-ordination between hands.
- If the child does not establish a consistent hand dominance they may; get confused about which hand to use for activities, take longer, and have messier drawing, writing, and cutting skills.

When should be concerned about hand dominance

- Some children will show a hand preference for one hand in some activities and a preference for another hand in a different activity e.g. writing with left hand and cutting with the right. This does not necessarily indicate a problem as

long as they consistently use the same hand for the same activity.

If your child does not use one hand as his preferred hand, do not choose or force him to use one hand. Instead, carefully observe your child whilst he is playing or doing everyday activities. Make a note of whether one hand is used more, or if one hand appears more skilled than the other. For example, observe your child drawing or writing; cutting and pasting; brushing his teeth or hair; eating and drinking; and during any other play activities. Position toys or activities in front, and to the centre, of your child so that he can choose which hand to use rather than using the hand closest to the toy.

For example, position pencils in front of your child when he is drawing so that he can choose which hand to hold the pencil with rather than using the hand closest to the pencil.

Activities to practice and promote hand dominance

- Opening jars/lids
- Scissor activities, one hand on scissors.
- Screwing up a nut and bolt
- Colouring on small pieces of paper encourages one hand to hold the paper.
- Tracing around objects, stencils.
- Sewing cards, treading games.
- Construction toys e.g. Lego, Duplo.
- Throwing and rolling large balls
- Using rolling pin and cutter with play dough or for baking
- Throwing bean bags, small toys or balls into a container placed on their left side if they are throwing with the right hand or their right if throwing with left hand.

- High fives. The child will often use their dominant hand.
- Show me game e.g. show me how you brush your hair, clean your teeth, eat a biscuit, throw a ball and they will usually start with the dominant hand.
- Cooking hold a bowl and stir.
- On all fours, scribble on paper. The child will tend to lean on the non dominant hand.