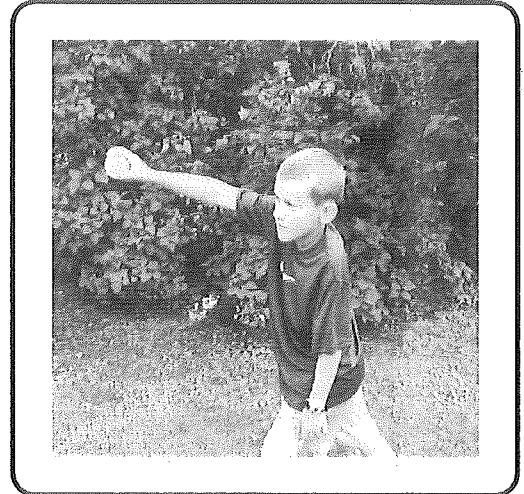


5 Tips to Help Children Develop Hand Dominance

Hand dominance is the preference to use one hand over the other (right handed versus left handed). It is usually determined by 6-7 years of age. Children need to develop the skills to have one hand be dominant (the worker hand) and the other hand be non-dominant (the helper hand). Here are 5 tips to help children develop hand dominance:



1. **Observation:** Observe the child throughout the day. What hand does the child use for brushing teeth, brushing hair, throwing a ball, eating? These can all be clues to help determine which hand is dominant in a child. Try putting materials at midline if you are not sure which hand the child prefers. Present materials and objects at midline (meaning in the middle of the desk or table, not the left or right of the child). Which hand does the child reach with to pick up the materials?
2. **Practice crossing midline activities:** Sometimes children switch hands when performing a task because they avoid crossing midline. Practice making large art - ie rainbows on the white board. Encourage the child to reach across the body to get objects - ie reach with the right hand over to the left side of the body.
3. **Maintain the use of the dominant hand:** If a child does show a preference for hand dominance, encourage the child to use that hand throughout the activity and not to switch. If you need to put a green dot, watch or bracelet on the dominant hand to remind the student to use that hand for the entire task.
4. **Practice throwing:** Play catch and encourage the child to throw using the dominant hand. Throw large balls, small balls, squishy balls and bean bags.
5. **Practice bilateral coordination skills where there is a worker and helper hand:** Use interlocking building blocks, lacing cards, wash dishes (hold plate with non-dominant hand and sponge with the dominant hand), etc.