

# Are you a 'lefty'?

<http://www.cyh.com/HealthTopics/HealthTopicDetailsKids.aspx?p=335&id=2891&np=152#6>

## If you are a 'lefty'



Being left handed means that you are one of hundreds of millions of people around the world who do things with their left hand, which most people do with their right hand. For example, you may write with your left hand, and hold a bat or throw a ball with your left hand.

There are almost 9 times more people who are right handed. As a result, most activities, tools, sports equipment etc. have been made for right handed people.

## How you became a 'lefty'

Scientists are not sure about why around 85-90% of people are right handed and the others turn out to be left handed.

They have discovered that:

- Left handedness often runs in families. So, it seems that your genes have something to do with it. Someone else in your family might be left handed too. However, many left-handed kids have right handed parents and brothers and sisters. How genes work is often rather unclear.
- More boys than girls are left handed.



- Some people who have injured their right hand or arm have to learn to become left handed.

Some people use their left hand for most things but can use their right hand too. This is called being ambidextrous but only about 1% of all people are truly able to do everything really easily and well with both hands.

## In the 'old days'

In the old days some people believed that being left handed was evil! The word sinister, which means evil, comes from the Latin word for left, and satan, or the devil as he is sometimes known, was believed to be left handed.

Parents and teachers would sometimes hit and humiliate left handed children unless they wrote right handed.

Sometimes a child's left arm would be tied behind him or her to force writing with the right.

This was not meant to be cruel but rather to 'correct' what was seen to be a fault and to help those kids to fit in to a right-handed world.

## 'Lefties' at school

Kids are not beaten into becoming right handed any more. However, being left handed has its share of difficulties.

Sharing a desk with a right-hander can be difficult.



A computer mouse is usually set up for a right-handed person but it can be easily switched over to work for the left hand.

Did you know that tools like scissors are difficult for left handers to use? You may have to buy your own left-handed scissors to overcome this problem but mostly people who are left handed need to learn how to cut with normal scissors (holding the scissors in their right hand and moving the paper around) as that is what they will need to be able to do most of the time.

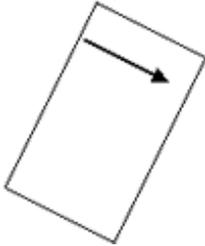
When kids are first learning to write it can be harder for lefties to make the letters unless they learn, right from the beginning, how to sit and how to hold a pencil.

## Writing help

The English language is written from left to right so that makes it more difficult for 'lefties' to see what they have written as their hand covers it. Some 'lefties' hook their hand over the top of their writing, but it can be hard to write neatly and some kids cramp up in their fingers. Here is a way of writing that may make things easier for you.

1. Sit up straight at the table or desk.
2. Make sure you have more space on the left of the table to rest your arm.

3. Tilt the paper to your right at the top. Like this:



4. Hold your pencil about the width of your thumb from the point.
5. Keep your wrist straight when you are writing.
6. Hold your hand in a relaxed position. Don't tighten up your fingers.
7. Make sure your hand is below the line of your writing then you can see what you are doing.
8. Don't lean forward or rest your head on the desk.

If you didn't learn to write like this from the beginning you may need to practice every day until it comes easier to you but it will help you to be a neater writer and writing will be less stressful.

### 'Lefties' at work



'Lefties' may have an advantage when it comes to using a computer (if they get the mouse set up correctly for them) as more words are written using keys on the left side of the keyboard only.

Tools and machinery can be a problem as safety guards may not be in the best position for a left hander, or the way the machine is built, a 'lefty' has to be in an awkward position to use it, or work out to do the task with their right hand.

But athletes in ball or batting sports may have an advantage. Being able to throw, catch, kick or hit left handed can give a 'lefty' an extra element of surprise against right handed players.

Here is a great site where you can find out more about being a 'lefty'.

<http://www.leftys.com.au>

**Did you know** that there is a special day set aside for 'leftys'? Left Handers' Day is on 13 August. It started in the USA in 1976 and has spread across the world.

## Kids say

- "Hi, I am left handed and ambidextrous. When I play tennis I find it easier serving with my left hand because I throw right handed. In footy I kick with both feet." **Will**
- "Hi, my name is **Tamiya** and I'm a 'lefty'. No one else in my family is left handed. Life has been pretty hard being left handed. When I write a story using a pencil my arm gets all silver from the pencil. But I've learned to live with it. "
- "Hello, I'm **Harry** and no I am not a 'lefty'. But, when I broke my right wrist I had to learn to write with my left hand. It was really hard, but I eventually got it. When my wrist was better I went back to writing right handed."



## Dr Kim says

If you are right-handed, have a go at writing with your left hand to see how hard it is for a lefty to write using their right hand.

All of us have to learn to use both hands for some things. When you are old enough to drive a manual car you have to use both hands. You need to use both hands to be able to type properly. You need to use both arms to give someone a hug!



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*We've provided this information to help you to understand important things about staying healthy and happy. However, if you feel sick or unhappy, it is important to tell your mom or dad, a teacher or another grown-up.*