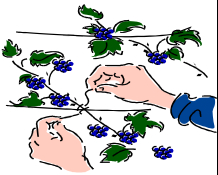




### **Developing Coordinated Hand Use Hand Dominance**

Children develop hand dominance at around 3 – 5 years (but sometimes later). Having hand dominance allows one hand to become the stabiliser and one to be active, which is required to complete many tasks e.g. handwriting or using scissors. To work out which hand is dominant ask them to pick up a pencil (from the middle of a desk), ask them to open a jar or ask which hand they brush their teeth with.

- Encourage the child to use one hand as the stabiliser and the other as the lead hand (e.g. left hand is the stabiliser if they're right handed).
- Opening jars and containers, remind your child to hold the jar/container very still with one hand whilst turning with the other hand.
- Use stencils or rubbings, which the child has to hold very still with one hand.
- When using scissors encourage your child to rotate the paper with one hand whilst cutting with the other hand.
- Tasks that involve mixing (e.g. paint and glue or cooking) so the child has to use one hand to stabilise bowl and the other to mix/beat.
- Musical activities – e.g. hold a drum with one hand and beating with the other.
- Collecting items (e.g. pencils, brushes) from around the classroom – hold the pot in one hand and pick up with the other.
- Threading beads – hold the string with one hand and pick up and thread the beads with the other.



### **Two Handed Activities**

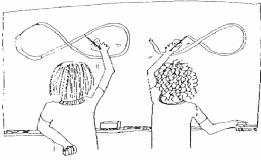
Bilateral arm and hand use is simply the ability to use the arms and hands together in an effective manner to accomplish an activity. This coordination between the right and left side of the body is the basis for all coordinated movement. This develops throughout childhood progressing to well controlled manipulation of objects, with each hand performing a different part of the task at the same time.

#### **Symmetrical (both hands doing the same job)**

- Using a cardboard tube or a stick with both hands bounce a balloon or push a big ball around the room. – have a race with two or more children
- Knead dough and use a rolling pin to roll it out to make biscuits. Do the same with playdough or plasticine to make pretend biscuits or cakes.
- Throw and catch a large ball or bounce and catch against a wall (using a larger ball makes it imperative to use both hands)
- Play with cymbals or simply invent your own instruments and bang two pan lids together or use two wooden spoons to drum on a washing up bowl or a pan

#### **Asymmetrical (using a lead or dominant hand and a stabilising hand)**

- Play with wind up toys
- Store toys in containers that require two hands to open ( you may need to loosen lids first to make it achievable without creating too much frustration)
- Thread beads, buttons, cotton reels, pasta to make a necklace or garland
- Pour water sand from one container to another
- Construction toys Duplo, Lego etc
- All art and craft type tasks i.e. cutting, sticking, gluing
- Make 'junk models' using old packets and cereal boxes etc to make a car, house or whatever you want!
- Mix ingredients in a bowl to make cakes or biscuits



### **Crossing the midline**

Children need to be able to use their arms (and legs) and eyes across their body (midline) e.g. to write across the page, read or use cutlery. The midline is an imaginary line drawn vertically dividing the body into two equal parts.

#### **At the table**

- Encourage your child to use the same hand when drawing across the page / board rather than swapping hands (e.g. hold the other one behind their back).
- Position equipment / objects so your child has to cross the midline when reaching.
- Encourage the child to sit straight and not twist when drawing.
- On a board or easel or large pieces of paper tacked to the wall, stand in one place and draw right to left across the paper in large strokes eg. Matching pictures or drawing a road.
- Diagonally do the same thing drawing lines joining kite strings to hands.
- These could include matching games in maths or reading.
- Large dot to dots on the wall (keep the pencil in one hand and get your child to stand still) so they have to cross their midline.

#### **Movement Activities**

- Touching hands on knees on the same side of the body and then on the opposite knee as quickly as possible.
- Throwing diagonally e.g. with the right hand to hit a target on the left.
- Stepping-stones – walk across the room on stepping stones (made out of paper or mats) placed so the child has to cross their legs.

Adapted with kind permission from Northumberland PCT Children's Occupational Therapy Service