



Hand Preference

What is it?

Hand preference is the consistent use of one hand for the skilled part of an activity. For example when cutting with scissors, the preferred hand holds the scissors whilst the other hand holds and turns the paper. Hand preference usually starts to develop between 2 and 4 years of age, however children may still swap hands at this stage. Between 4-5 years a clear hand preference is usually established. Children who are slow to establish hand preference and continue to swap hands, do not have enough opportunities to practice using their preferred hand to develop the strength and dexterity needed for many school and day to day activities.

How to develop it

If your child does not use one hand as their preferred hand, carefully observe them during everyday activities and make a note of whether one hand is used more or if one hand is more skilled than the other.

Once it is clear which hand your child prefers, it is important to encourage them to consistently use this hand.

Activities to encourage use of the preferred hand include:

- Cutting with scissors
- Sharpening pencils
- Cooking activities – stirring, sifting, grating
- Stencils
- Hitting balls with bats and throwing balls
- Painting
- Using cutlery
- Removing lids from jars
- Digging in a garden or sandpit