

Dominance

Learning is much easier if dominance is all lined up on the same side, i.e. if you are right eyed, right eared, right handed, and right footed or left eyed, left eared, left handed, and left footed. Mixed dominance is exhibited in a variety of ways. Most frequently parents complain that their children can't remember the things they knew today by the time tomorrow or next week comes. Overly emotional children are also often mixed dominant – as are very artistic people 😊. Mixed dominance is often one, but not the only one, of the underlying issues of dyslexia as well.

We do not work on dominance until a child is 5 or 6. Before that we just work on strength and dexterity on both sides. By the time a child reaches school age, most will have naturally established dominance to some degree. They will use one hand for most activities and are probably establishing a dominant eye, ear, and foot as well although these are not as easy to observe.

Checking for dominance

- Eye – Check for both near point and far point dominance over the course of a few days.
 - o Near Point – Hand them a variety of items to look through (kaleidoscope, tube, keyhole, camera, . . .) and observe which eye they use.
 - o Far Point – With both eyes open, have them point at something across the room. Close one eye, then the other. If the item 'moves' when you close an eye, the open eye is not being used dominantly. If your finger is still pointing at the item when you close an eye, you are using the open eye dominantly. With a small child, have them point at your finger with both eyes open. As your eyes follow along your arm and theirs, you will find yourself looking at one of their eyes. That is the eye they are using dominantly.
- Ear – Over the course of several days, have them listen to a variety of things like a conversation on the other side of a door, a watch that you are holding under the table, a phone, . . .
- Hand – Over the course of a day or two, make many observations of what hand the child uses for a wide variety of activities like eating, writing, throwing, brushing teeth, brushing hair, stirring, etc.
- Foot – Over the course of a day or two, have your child do several things requiring the use of one foot like hopping on one foot, kicking a ball, etc.

In each case you only care whether your child ALWAYS uses the same eye, ear, hand, or foot. If they ALWAYS use the same eye, for example, great. If they are even a little bit mixed, then we work on it.

Determining which side to push toward

- If a child is mixed dominant (right handed and eyed but left eared and footed for example), we normally work to line the eye, ear, and foot up with the hand. If the hand is very mixed and so you are not sure which side they are genetically wired to be, you can check the following physical expressions of dominance. If you are uncertain which side should be dominant after observing these things, an evaluation with a neurodevelopmentalist is definitely warranted.

- Hair swirls – Stand behind your child and look at the crown of their head. The swirl there normally points to the side they are genetically wired to be. If the swirl goes to the right (clockwise), they are probably wired to be right sided. If the swirl goes to the left (counterclockwise), they are probably genetically wired to be left sided. If they have multiple swirls that go different directions, they are currently mixed dominant.
- Foot size – Most people have a larger foot and a smaller foot. The SMALLER foot is usually on the dominant side.

Working on dominance

Once you have decided which side to push toward and which items need work (are not 100% on the dominant side), it's time to get started.

Eye – The non-dominant eye should be patched during all academic input as well as during all screen time. This can be up to 4-6 hours per day. There are several ways to patch an eye:

- Pirate patch – This is most kids' least favorite method but not all. Some kids like a patch.
- Kids who don't wear glasses – The easiest way is to get a pair of fashion glasses at a store like Claire's or a pair of frames with clear glass from an optometrist. They will often give you a pair that they are discontinuing. Paint over the lens of the non-dominant eye with clear nail polish. Let it dry and look through it. If you can still read through it, it's not blurry enough. Continue coating with nail polish until the non-dominant eye is blurry enough that you can't read through it.
- Kids who do wear glasses – Make a cloth sleeve that you can slide over the lens for the non-dominant eye or get Press 'n Seal at the grocery store and cover the lens of the non-dominant eye with Press 'n Seal.
- Last ditch effort 😊 - If the child is very non-compliant about patching, a large bandage can be used over the eye.

Ear – The non-dominant ear should be plugged 4-8 hours per day. Do not use the industrial foam ear plugs that you roll up and stick down in the ear. Instead, use Mack's Ear Plugs. They are a silicone type plug and are available at drug stores, Wal-Mart, etc. Half a plug is usually enough. Simply lay the plug on the outside of the ear and then push it with your index finger.

Hand – Encourage the child to use their dominant hand for all activities. Sometimes just an occasional reminder to use the dominant hand is enough. If the child forgets a lot or doesn't want to use their dominant hand, you can remind them by having them wear a sling for several hours a day. If needed, wrap the arm to their body with an ACE bandage. You can also practice certain activities like dribbling a basketball or throwing a ball with just the dominant hand for a few minutes a day.

Foot – Because it is the least tied to learning, we just suggest spending a few minutes a day hopping on just the dominant foot and kicking a ball with only the dominant foot.