



## Assessment Means Form: Hand Dominance

**Assessment Overview:** Teachers should aim to assess students in the most naturalistic environment first (i.e., observation) before moving on to more intentionally structured activities (i.e., the Situation).

**What Teachers Need to Know and Observe:** Children will not ALWAYS use their dominant hand in every activity and setting. Some hand switching can be expected even at the highest level of this progression.

If a child is only using one hand (same hand) to complete every task and ignoring the other hand, further evaluation of fine motor skills may be required.

**Observation Instructions:** Use the suggested activities and materials to create opportunities to observe hand dominance. When observing a child in an activity, look for which hand he/she uses and whether or not he/she gets assistance from the non-dominant hand.

Potential Opportunities for Observation	Potential Materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Art center (e.g., Cutting with scissors, writing, drawing, painting or coloring)</li> <li>➤ Writing center/time (e.g., Writer's Workshop)</li> <li>➤ Cafeteria or snack time (e.g., eating with utensils)</li> </ul> <p>NOTE: A child's behavior should only be documented when he/she is using paper that is not stabilized (e.g., if paper is stabilized by being attached to an easel or clipboard, assistance by the non-dominant hand will not be necessary and the highest level of this progression cannot be observed)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Scissors (both right and left handed; adaptive scissors*) and paper</li> <li>➤ Variety of writing implements (e.g., crayons, pencils, paintbrushes, markers) and paper</li> <li>➤ Eating utensils</li> </ul> <p>*Adaptive scissors may be provided during an observation of hand dominance IF grip and manipulation is not being assessed at the same time (adaptive scissors may not be used during observations of grip and manipulation because finger placement in loops cannot be observed).</p>

**Observation Prompts:** Instruction on fine motor activities (e.g., reminders to stabilize plate or turn paper, modeling, hand-over-hand, etc.) should only be provided AFTER documenting child's skills or behavior.

**Placing a Child on this Progression:** With all progressions, the goal is to identify the level at which the child is solidly performing. If the child is inconsistent at a given level, as children often are when they are learning a new skill, the correct placement is at a lower level. The teacher needs to collect enough evidence to be confident that the child is correctly placed on the progression. This will include multiple pieces of evidence where the child demonstrates the skill level at which he/she is placed and at least one documented instance of allowing the child the opportunity to demonstrate his/her skills/behavior at the next highest level. It will be difficult to place some children on a progression. Children who are not yet at Skill A should be marked as "Emerging" for that progression. Children who have reached the highest level of a progression should be marked at that highest level.

Skill Progression	Observation Examples
<b>A.</b> Uses no established dominance for lead/dominant hand (switching still continues).	<i>Isaiah switches his spoon back and forth between hands when eating yogurt.</i>
<b>B.</b> Uses established dominant hand.	<i>Archer cuts with her right hand (dominant hand) but doesn't turn the paper with her left hand to help her cut out a shape.</i>
<b>C.</b> Manipulates with dominant hand with assistance from other hand.	<i>Declan draws with his right hand (dominant hand) and stabilizes the paper with his left hand.</i>



## Hand Dominance Situation

### Friendship Wreath Activity

**Suggested Group Size:** Small group, large group, or individual setting.

**Situation Instructions:** The teacher reads a book aloud about friendship and engages children in a discussion about why the characters were friends, how they became friends, and how they settled arguments. The teacher listens to children's ideas about what they think makes a good friend. After the conversation, the teacher explains that they will work together to create a friendship wreath and states the purpose of the activity (e.g. "You have a classroom of new friends"; "Friends lend a helping hand"; "Our hearts feel happy when we have friends").

The teacher shows children the materials for the activity and provides the following steps:

1. Choose your paper (teacher holds up several pieces of paper in different colors, each with an outline of a large heart).
2. Draw a picture on the heart (teacher holds up a paper with an outline of a large heart and has a picture on it).
3. Cut out the heart (teacher holds up scissors and a paper with an outline of a large heart).

The teacher observes children in groups and/or individually as they make hearts for the friendship wreath. As the children cut out their heart and draw a picture on it, the teacher observes for **Hand Dominance (and Grip & Manipulation)** while children use the writing instruments and scissors. The hearts are joined together to create a large friendship wreath and displayed.

#### **Situation Prompts:**

- If needed, place objects on both sides of the child so it is easy for child to pick up objects with either hand.
- Children may sit or stand for this activity. Remind students who are sitting to sit up straight with both feet on the ground (to support trunk stability).
- Children should be at an appropriately-sized table or work area.

#### **Materials**

- ✓ Book about friendship (grade-appropriate)
- ✓ Handout with an outline of a large heart (at least 4-5 inches across) on 8 1/2 x 11-inch paper \*
- ✓ Scissors (both right and left handed; adaptive scissors\*\*)
- ✓ Multiple colors of paper and writing implements (to support child engagement)
- ✓ Variety of writing/drawing implements of differing size/thickness to support all grips (e.g., primary pencils & No. 2 pencils, standard crayons & jumbo crayons, markers of different sizes)

\* Heart should be drawn/printed with a high contrast color (e.g., black line on light colored paper) so it is easy for children to see.

\*\* Adaptive scissors may be provided in the hand dominance observation if the teacher is not concurrently assessing grip and manipulation.



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### Hand Dominance Situation Examples by Skill Level

Skill	Skill Progression	Situation Examples
A	Uses no established dominance for lead/dominant hand (switching still continues).	<p><i>*When drawing a picture on a heart, Isla switches the writing implement back and forth between her hands.</i></p> <p><i>*When cutting out a paper heart, Allen switches scissors back and forth between his hands.</i></p>
B	Uses established dominant hand.	<p><i>*When drawing a picture on a heart, Tanya shows a preference for her right hand and consistently uses that hand when manipulating writing implements, BUT DOES NOT use her left hand cooperatively to help her complete a task (e.g., draws with right hand but doesn't stabilize paper with left hand).</i></p> <p><i>*When cutting out a paper heart, Ivan shows a preference for his left hand and consistently uses that hand when manipulating the scissors, BUT DOES NOT use his right hand cooperatively to help him turn the paper.</i></p>
C	Manipulates with dominant hand with assistance from other hand.	<p><i>*When drawing a picture on a heart, Omar shows a preference for his right hand and consistently uses that hand when manipulating writing implements AND uses his left hand cooperatively to help him complete a task.</i></p> <p><i>*When cutting out a paper heart, Vivian shows a preference for her left hand and consistently uses that hand when manipulating the scissors AND uses her right hand cooperatively to help her turn the paper to cut out the heart shape.</i></p>

**NOTE: There is no Task for Hand Dominance.**