

Left Handed vs. Right Handed?

By Val Boston



Expert Forum



I had lunch today with a friend and when our server approached and began to write down our order, I noticed that she was left handed. Since I am also left handed, it started an interesting conversation. Though she was much younger than I, we had similar experiences growing up. My 1st grade teacher, Mrs. Sullivan, tried to change me over my mother's protests. My waitress' mother tried to change her over her grandmother's objections.

We both struggled and had to adjust growing up with learning how to write, contorting our hands to adjust to the right handed world. Those writing surfaces attached to those small desks were on the right side requiring significant "adjustment" for left handers. I grew up playing sports as left handed. In some ways this was an advantage though in most cases a major challenge.

As I turned to my lunch companion I noticed an expression of surprise, and he commented that, "I never thought about this. Being right handed, it never came up before." Our conversation continued as I discussed many of the challenges I faced in my early years. I had a job on a large manufacturing site and on my first day my manager asked me to take the golf cart over to building B and bring back the "right handed monkey wrench". My contact at building B sent me to building D, and so on and so on. After visiting 4 different locations it dawned on me that something didn't seem correct. As a left handed person, and somewhat naive, it seemed only logical that such a tool existed. Only after I returned to my workspace did I learn that this was part of the new hire "orientation"!

Many things are taken for granted. For example, signing your name on the register when entering a business. The binder rings are typically at the top or to the left requiring me to contort my hand. Another example would be sitting at my local Starbucks one morning and observing that the doors open on the right side.

Recognizing that we live in a right hand dominated world, left handers are required to adapt and adjust to be effective. In many cases left handed people are not taken seriously or discriminated against. On a much larger and more significant scale, consider members of our society that are made to "adapt and adjust" to exist or merely survive. This can go far further than the inconveniences

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we "lefties" have to deal with. Those with "privilege" may not even be aware of what seems to be commonplace.