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## Things You Never Knew About Left-Handed People



**Judy Koutsky**

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By 10 percent of the population is left-handed. While there may not be many of them, being left-handed sure does come with some surprising perks!



ESB PROFESSIONAL/SHUTTERSTOCK

## Being a lefty may help you succeed in leadership roles

“When I was at Columbia Law School, which is one of the most elite schools in the country, we noticed that a large proportion of the class was left-handed,” says [Robert S. Herbst](#) a left-handed attorney, wellness expert, motivational speaker, and powerlifter. “This made sense as left-handed people are right brained meaning they are more creative, analytical, verbal, and have better language skills, all of which are traits necessary to being a good lawyer.” Herbst was also an Eagle Scout: “I have met a number of left-handed Eagle Scouts, including Michael Bloomberg, the billionaire and former New York City mayor. Perhaps being right brained and left-handed also gave us the leadership ability, discipline, and ambition to excel even at an early age.” It could very well be that being a lefty helps you succeed and these [25 famous left-handed people](#) are proof of that.

KM-PHOTOGRAPHY/SHUTTERSTOCK

## Lefties often learn to be ambidextrous

“Over the years I have found myself learning to be ambidextrous simply because I had to,” says Ernestine Sclafani, a public relations specialist in Los Angeles. “The world is geared towards being right-handed: buttons on jackets, jeans, doorways, desks in school.” Certain activities also were made easier by switching the hands. “Learning to play golf was much easier being a right-handed person than left,” she says. Today, there’s more awareness of lefties and more products and activities that accommodate them. But being ambidextrous is certainly a good skill to have. Here is [why lefties were retrained to use their right hand](#).

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## Left-handedness lets you stand out

"I remember back in high school a friend had told me that being a lefty was going to be made into a handicap," says Danielle Becker, a mixed media artist and the founder of [Leftys Right Mind](#). "Besides being the only one in class with the side of their hand completely covered in pencil, I never felt being a lefty inhibited me from excelling in my work, let alone hold me back in life. In fact, I believe it sets me apart from the rest. I cherish the fact that I am a lefty. My left hand has guided me over the years to find my passion and to be able to live my dream as a professional designer." She credits her creativity—her work as an artist—to being a lefty. "I thrive in the creative world. My wide array of talents across multiple platforms is rooted in (lefty) hands-on art making and a commitment to unbound creativity." Look out for these [10 hidden dangers of being left-handed](#).

DRAGON IMAGES/SHUTTERSTOCK

## It's a great conversation starter

"I'm a lefty and find that, strangely, people often notice," says Ingrid Hansen, a publicist at Launch Media. "It's a great conversation starter when they do." Also, she finds that many lefties are introverted, which actually led her to her career. "As an introvert, I've created a successful company that coaches other introverts, including lefties, on speaking to the media."

DITTY\_ABOUT\_SUMMER/SHUTTERSTOCK

## While it's not always easy, the challenges can make you stronger

"While I cherish my creativity, I do find it difficult to live in a right-handed world," says [Kim Murphy](#), a left-handed author in Batesville, Virginia. "For instance, when I go to the library for research, there are rarely any computers set up for lefties. Garden equipment, such as weed whackers, can be downright dangerous for me to use. Still, I love being different." Having to overcome obstacles, and always challenging yourself, ultimately makes you a stronger person. She, too, credits her left-handedness to her creative spirit. "Because I'm an author, I have met many authors and artists over

the years and a higher percentage of the artists I have met are left-handed.” Here are some more [advantages of being left-handed](#).

ASYA NURULLINA/SHUTTERSTOCK

## Lefties aren't necessarily more likely to think outside the box

According to the [American Psychological Association](#), 10 percent of the population is left-handed. One [study](#) in the *Journal of Mental and Nervous Disease* musicians, painters and writers were significantly more likely to be left-handed. However, a [conflicting study](#) of more than 1,000 people debunked the myth that “right-brained” people are more creative than “left-brained” people. It found that no one has a dominant side of the brain and both sides are involved in creativity. Don't miss these other [myths about lefties that we all need to stop believing](#).

MARIA SBYTOVA/SHUTTERSTOCK

## You are in good company with these left-handed presidents

There have been [eight presidents](#) who have been lefties, including James A. Garfield, Herbert Hoover, Harry S Truman, Gerald Ford, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama.



PRESSMASTER/SHUTTERSTOCK

## You're likely to find lefties in your extended family tree

According to the [U.S. National Library of Medicine](#), multiple factors including genetics, environment, and chance determine whether a person is left-handed. It was initially thought that a single gene controlled handedness, however recent studies suggest that multiple genes, perhaps up to 40, contribute to this trait. Each of these genes likely has a weak effect by itself, but together they play a significant role in establishing hand preference. However, because the overall chance of being left-handed is relatively low, most children of left-handed parents are right-handed (even though there's a greater chance that left-handed parents have left-handed kids). If you look far enough in your family tree, you may be surprised to find a number of lefties there. Check out these other [quirky traits you didn't know you inherited](#).

SYDA PRODUCTIONS/SHUTTERSTOCK

## You have a decreased risk for some health concerns

In a study published in [Laterality](#), it was found that left-handed people have a lower prevalence of arthritis and ulcers. It probably doesn't have to do with your handedness, though. Researchers believe it's related to the underlying DNA that creates left-handedness—the genes that are associated with lefties. So if you're ever teased for being a lefty, remind yourself that they have a higher chance of developing those painful conditions. You should also try out one of these [quirky inventions made for lefties](#).

JACOB LUND/SHUTTERSTOCK

## You're a better GPS

Do you or your left-handed friends have a knack for reading maps, remembering parking spaces, and figuring out how to get from Point A to Point B? According to a [classic study](#), researchers observed that left-handed people showed a lower rate of error in a spatial orientation test than righties. Spatial skills will always be important (yes, even in the age of the GPS)—you never know when you and your right-handed counterparts will get lost in the woods and you'll be able to save the day. Here are the [20 worst products for left-handed people](#).

CHICCODODIFC/SHUTTERSTOCK

## You bounce back more quickly from injuries

If you suffer from a stroke or other brain-related injuries, [research](#) shows that left-handed people recover faster. While we hope nobody has to go through anything as traumatic as a brain injury, it's nice to know that you could potentially have an easier time recovering. The reasoning? The cognitive functions are spread out in the brains of lefties, which means that in theory, when you have a stroke (which is typically concentrated to a small area of the brain), less of your cognitive functioning will be affected.

ROBERT KNESCHKE/SHUTTERSTOCK

## Lefties are more competitive

Everything is a competition nowadays, so being competitive will get you far. In a [study](#) done at Northwestern, it was found that lefties are more competitive than cooperative. Take this example from the study: “Cooperation favors same-handedness—for sharing the same tools, for example. Physical competition, on the other hand, favors the unusual. In a fight, a left-hander in a right-handed world would have an advantage.” So, being a leftie could give you a leg up on physical competitions like certain sports, but the jury’s still out on mental competitions. These are the [10 traits all millionaires share](#).

RUSTAM\_SHAIMOV/SHUTTERSTOCK

## Lefties are better at video games

Before you ask: No, it doesn't have to do with the competition thing. Research from Australia National University showed that left-handed people outperform right-handers in processing a large amount of information at a fast rate... like shooting enemies, dodging zombies, and avoiding GTA car collisions. These findings can be extended past the computer screen, too. Like, you're probably better at absorbing the list of things your mother told you to do during your last phone call than your righty counterparts. (We're joking, of course, but this skill is certainly a valuable asset.) Check out these [12 traits you thought were inherited—but aren't](#).

ARTMOIS/SHUTTERSTOCK

## You may have better self-control

As it turns out, left-handers are shown to have better self-control than right-handers. They don't have any trouble passing up those brownies or refraining from lashing out at a coworker, two things that can be very difficult sometimes. A [study](#) in JECN found that lefties have better "inhibitory control," which regulates the way we control ourselves, than righties. That will come in handy! (Pun intended)

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## Your right-handed family members are more similar to you than you think

“While people tend to draw a line in the sand between lefties and righties, research is starting to suggest that it’s not quite that simple,” says [Jason Eckerman](#), PhD, a licensed psychologist and lefty. He notes that one study found that righties that had left-handed blood relatives showed similar brain scans to lefties when presented with a language task, whereas righties without left-handed relatives responded pretty differently. What does this mean? “If you’re the only lefty in your family, you can feel comforted by the fact that your right-handed family members probably understand you better than you think.” Next, find out [what your handwriting says about you](#).

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Judy Koutsky is a New York-based writer and editor covering health, lifestyle and travel. Her award-winning articles have appeared in over 30 publications including RD.com, Conde Nast Traveler, Travel + Leisure, Oprah.com, Parents, Forbes.com, Shape, USA Today, Prevention, Good Housekeeping, Web MD and Scholastic. You can see her writing at [JudyKoutsky.com](#) or follow her on Instagram at [@JudyKoutsky](#)

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