

## Why 90 per cent of humans are right-handed

21st May 2026



Around 90 per cent of people worldwide are right-handed. Scientists have spent decades trying to find out why. Researchers from Oxford University in the UK believe they have a possible answer. Their research suggests that

the answer is because of two features of human evolution. The first is walking on two legs, and the other is the large size of the human brain. When humans first started walking on two legs, their hands were free to do things. Our large brain worked out many things to do with our hands like using tools. If most people used the same hand, using tools and working with others became easier. This became useful for things like hunting and cooking.

Scientists thought the key to finding the answer was why only humans are largely right-handed. Primates (monkeys and apes) use both hands equally. The researchers compared human behaviour and brain patterns with 41 species of monkeys and apes. The research findings showed that humans have longer legs compared to their arm length. Another reason is that the left side of the brain controls the right hand. It is also responsible for motor skills and coordination. A researcher said: "By looking across many primate species, we can begin to understand which aspects of handedness are ancient and shared, and which are uniquely human."

**Sources:** popsci.com / sciencedaily.com / msn.com

### Writing

We need to know more about why so many people are right-handed. Discuss.

### Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

scientists / decades / research / evolution / hands / brain / tools / cooking / hunting / key / monkeys / apes / human behaviour / arm length / motor skills / reason / ancient

### True / False

- 1) Exactly 90% of people in the world are right-handed. T / F
- 2) Scientists have researched right-handedness for thousands of years. T / F
- 3) One reason for right-handedness may be the fact we walk on two legs. T / F
- 4) It is possible that using the same tools made most of us right-handed. T / F
- 5) Many animal species are only right-handed. T / F
- 6) Scientists compared 41 apes with 41 monkeys. T / F
- 7) The left side of the brain controls our right hand. T / F
- 8) A researcher said monkeys cannot help us understand right-handedness. T / F

### Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- |                     |                |
|---------------------|----------------|
| 1. <b>worldwide</b> | a. development |
| 2. <b>decade</b>    | b. points      |
| 3. <b>evolution</b> | c. beneficial  |
| 4. <b>started</b>   | d. mostly      |
| 5. <b>useful</b>    | e. globally    |
| 6. <b>key</b>       | f. kinds       |
| 7. <b>largely</b>   | g. began       |
| 8. <b>species</b>   | h. 10 years    |
| 9. <b>aspects</b>   | i. very old    |
| 10. <b>ancient</b>  | j. answer      |

### Discussion – Student A

- a) Do you ever think about being right- or left-handed?
- b) Would you like to be able to use both hands equally well?
- c) What do you know about human evolution?
- d) Are you good with your hands?
- e) What things do you do most with your left hand?
- f) How are smartphones changing what we use our hands for?
- g) Does being left-handed have any disadvantages?
- h) Should we shake hands with right and left hands?

## Phrase Match

- |   |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. Around 90 per cent of people worldwide | a. trying to find out       |
| 2. Scientists have spent decades          | b. coordination             |
| 3. two features of human                  | c. are right-handed         |
| 4. When humans first started              | d. to finding the answer    |
| 5. This became useful for things          | e. of monkeys and apes      |
| 6. the key                                | f. walking on two legs      |
| 7. 41 species                             | g. evolution                |
| 8. longer legs compared                   | h. to understand            |
| 9. responsible for motor skills and       | i. to their arm length      |
| 10. we can begin                          | j. like hunting and cooking |

## Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- What are the differences between monkeys and apes?
- Are you a left brain or a right brain person?
- Do you have good hand-eye coordination?
- How often do you 'give someone a hand'?
- When was the last time you 'had your hands full'?
- When was the last time you 'washed your hands of something'?
- What questions would you like to ask the scientists?

## Spelling

- 90 per cent of people lirwoedwd
- Scientists have spent eddasec trying to find
- the answer is because of two eustreaf
- human otvueniol
- the large size of the human iabrn
- This became uulfes for things like hunting
- kyesomn and apes use both hands
- 41 eipsecs
- longer legs orpecmda to their arm length
- epesbrnlio for motor skills and coordination
- we can begin to understand which cptesas
- enquilyu human

### Answers – Synonym Match

1. e	2. h	3. a	4. g	5. c
6. j	7. d	8. f	9. b	10. i

## Comprehension Questions

Listen to / read the news article. Answer these questions. (Answers are on p. 27 of the 27-page PDF.)

1.	For how long have scientists been looking into right-handedness?
2.	Where are the researchers from?
3.	How many features of human evolution does the article mention?
4.	What did our brain find our hands could do after we started walking?
5.	What two useful things did we do if we used the same hand?
6.	Who are largely right-handed?
7.	Who uses both hands equally?
8.	What are longer compared to our arm length?
9.	What part of our brain controls our right hand?
10.	What can we look at to understand right- and left-handedness?

## Speaking – Hands

Rank these with your partner. Put the best things to do with your hands at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- |                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| • Text friends | • Cook       |
| • Clean        | • Draw       |
| • Clap         | • Play music |
| • Wave         | • Garden     |

### Answers – True False

1	F	2	F	3	T	4	T	5	F	6	F	7	T	8	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.