

The Left Brain, Right Brain Theory at Work

The knowledge and understanding of left brain right brain theory has been around since 1973. It is interesting to learn about our brain as it can give us insight into what we are all about. Below you will learn the key information about the differences in the two hemispheres. You will be able to determine whether you are left or right brain dominant and you will learn why you behave the way you do.

This information is “interesting”, but “so what”? Students tend to be left brain dominant. They have come through a schooling process of logical steps, of answering specific questions, and having answers that either right or wrong. To be a great marketer or salesperson a combination of both brains should be used. Once you understand your situation, you can make the adjustments to become better.

Left Brain versus Right Brain

Our brain, like the rest of our anatomy, is made up of two halves, a **left brain** and **right brain**. There's a big fold that goes from front to back in our brain, essentially dividing it into two distinct and separate parts. They are connected to each other by a thick cable of nerves at the base of each brain.

The **left** side of our body is "wired" to the **right** side of our brain, and vice versa. For whatever reason nature did this cross-over, it applies even to our eyes, which process their sensory data on opposite sides of the brain.

We can thank Nobel Prize Winner (1981) **Roger Sperry** for this contribution.

Researchers found that each side of the brain had a characteristic way that it both interpreted the world and reacted to it. The chart below will help illustrate the characteristics which are known to reside on each side of our brains.

Left Brain Functions	Right Brain Functions
Uses logic	Uses feelings
Detail oriented	“Big picture” oriented
Facts rule	Imagination rules
Words and language	Symbols and images
Forms strategies	Presents possibilities
Practical	Impetuous
Safe	Risk taking

Our personality can be thought of as a result of the degree to which these left and right brains interact, or, in some cases, do not interact. Each of us draws upon specific sides of our brain for a variety of daily functions, depending on such things as our education and life experiences. The choices of which brain hemisphere is in control of which situation, is what makes our personalities and determines our character.

Experiments show that most children rank highly creative (right brain) before entering school. Because our educational systems place a higher value on left brain skills such as mathematics, logic and language than it does on drawing or using our imagination, only ten percent of these same children will rank highly creative by age 7. By the time we are adults, high creativity remains in only 2 percent of the population.

The War of the Brains

The two brains not only see the world in vastly different ways but, the left brain tends to dismiss anything significant coming into consciousness from its "flaky" cranial twin. Sometimes two sides can actually disagree, resulting in our perception of emotional turmoil from the expressive protests of right brain.

Our conscious mind can only focus on data from one brain at a time. We can switch from one side to the other very quickly, but that's not always the most efficient way to act and eventually ultimate authority to enter consciousness is delegated to one brain or the other. In our modern world, this battle is almost always won by the left brain.

Are you left brain or right brain dominant?

Indicate which description or characteristic applies to you by circling the letter L or R.. There is no certain number of characteristics you must choose. For those you answered "yes" to, add the L's and R's at the right side to determine your dominance. If the numbers are close, that means you use both sides of your brain equally.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. I always wear a watch | L |
| 2. I keep a journal | L |
| 3. I believe there is a right and wrong way to do everything | L |
| 4. I hate following directions | R |
| 5. The expression "Life is just a bowl of cherries" makes no sense to me | L |
| 6. I find that sticking to a schedule is boring | R |
| 7. I'd rather draw someone a map the tell them how to get somewhere | R |
| 8. If I lost something, I'd try to remember where I saw last | L |
| 9. If I don't know which way to turn, I let my emotions guide me | R |
| 10. I'm pretty good at math | L |
| 11. If I had to assemble something, I'd read the directions first. | L |
| 12. I'm always late getting places | R |
| 13. Some people think I'm psychic | R |
| 14. Setting goals for myself helps keep me from slacking off | L |
| 15. When somebody asks me a question, I turn my head to the left | R |
| 16. If I have a tough decision to make, I write down the pros and the cons | L |
| 17. I'd make a good detective | L |
| 18. I am musically inclined | R |
| 19. If I have a problem, I try to work it out by relating it to one I've had in the past | R |
| 20. When I talk, I gesture a lot | R |
| 21. If someone asks me a question, I turn my head to the right | L |
| 22. I believe there are two sides to every story | R |
| 23. I can tell if someone is guilty just by looking at them | R |
| 24. I keep a to do list | L |
| 25. I feel comfortable expressing myself with words | L |
| 26. Before I take a stand on an issue, I get all the facts | L |
| 27. I've considered becoming a poet, a politician, an architect, or a dancer | R |
| 28. I lose track of time easily | R |
| 29. If I forgot someone's name, I'd go through the alphabet until I remembered it | L |
| 30. I like to draw | R |
| 31. When I'm confused, I usually go with my gut instinct | R |
| 32. I have considered becoming a lawyer, journalist, or doctor | L |

Now that you know if you are left or right brain, read the information below to help you understand how your brain processes information.

Chunk Up or Chunk Down

The left side of the brain processes information in a linear manner. It chunks up from part to whole. It takes pieces, lines them up, and arranges them in a logical order; then it draws conclusions. The right brain however, chunks from whole to parts. It starts with the answer. It sees the big picture first, not the details. If you are right-brained, you may have difficulty following a meeting unless you are given the big picture first. That is why it is absolutely necessary for a right-brained person to review an agenda or background information before a meeting or to survey a chapter before reading.

Sequential Vs. Random Processing

In addition to thinking in a linear manner, the left brain processes in sequence. The left brained person is a list maker. If you are left brained, you would enjoy making master schedules and daily planning. You complete tasks in order and take pleasure in checking them off when they are accomplished. Likewise, learning things in sequence is relatively easy for you. For example, spelling involves sequencing - if you are left-brained, you are probably a good speller. The left brain is also at work in the linear and sequential processing of math and in following directions.

By, contrast, the approach of the right-brained person is random. If you are right-brained, you may flit from one task to another. You will get just as much done, but perhaps without having addressed priorities. A project may be late or incomplete, not because you weren't working but because you were working on something else.

Conceptual Vs. Concrete Processing

The left brain has no trouble processing symbols or concepts. Many professions deal with symbols- such as letters, words, and mathematical notations. The left brained person tends to be comfortable with linguistic and mathematical endeavors. Left-brained people will probably just memorize vocabulary words or math formulas. The right brain, on the other hand, wants things to be concrete. The right brain person wants to see, feel, or touch the real object. Right brain people may have had trouble learning to read using phonics. They prefer to see words in context, to see how the formula works. To use your right brain, create opportunities for hands-on activities, use something real whenever possible.

Logical Vs. Intuitive Processing

The left brain processes in a linear, sequential, logical manner. When you process on the left side, you use information piece by piece to solve a problem or work through an issue. When you read and listen, you look for the pieces so that you can draw logical conclusions. If you process primarily on the right side of the brain, you use intuition. You may know the right answer to a problem but not be sure how you got it. You may have to start with the answer and work backwards. You have a gut feeling as to which answers are correct, and you are usually right. In writing, it is the left brain that pays attention to mechanics such as spelling, agreement, and punctuation. But the right side pays attention to coherence and meaning; that is, your right brain tells you it "feels" right.

Verbal Vs. Nonverbal Processing

Left brain people have little trouble expressing themselves in words. Right brain people may know what they mean, but often have trouble finding the right words. The best illustration of this is to listen to people give directions. The left brain person will say something like "From here, go west three blocks and turn north on Vine Street. Go three or four miles and then turn east onto Broad Street." The right brain person will sound something like this: "Turn right (pointing right), by the church over there (pointing again). Then you will pass a McDonalds and a Walmart. At the next light, turn right toward the BP station." Right brain people need to back up everything visually. If it's not written down, they probably won't remember it. And it would be even better for right brain people to illustrate it.

Reality-Based Vs. Fantasy-Oriented Processing

The left side of the brain deals with things the way they are-with reality. When left brain people are affected by the environment, they usually adjust to it. Not so with right brain people. They try to change the environment! Left brain people want to know the rules and follow them. In fact, if there are no rules for situations, they will probably make up rules to follow! Left brain people know the consequences of not being on time or not completing a project. But right brain people are sometimes not aware that there is anything wrong. So, if you are right brain, make sure you constantly ask for feedback and reality checks.

A Practical, *Very Unscientific* Exercise:

Put your hands together as if getting ready to pray. Look to see which thumb is on top. If your right thumb is on top, then you are probably right brained. If your left thumb is on top, then you are probably left brained.

"Which of your thumbs has the larger moon?" Generally this thumb is an indication of the non-dominant hemisphere (wider moon in left thumb = right hemisphere dominant; wider moon in right thumb = left hemisphere dominant). You might prefer to regard it as the "pointier" moon indicated the dominant hemisphere.

Brain Dominance Characteristics

Area	Left Brain Dominant	Right Brain Dominant
Attitude	A tendency to devalue creativity and spirituality. Over-dependence on Logic, feel responsible for others discomferts - blames self.	A tendency to 'space out', use spirituality to avoid responsibility, make others responsible for challenges and problems - blames others.
Likes	Control, uniformity, past-oriented, 'knowing', solitude	Socializing, colour, expression, future-oriented
Dislikes	Feeling smothered, fussed-over, un-trusted - by others (mostly females), feeling inadequate, unworthy	Feeling abandoned, controlled, betrayed - by others (mostly men), feeling incapable, 'wrong'
Gifts	Organization, leadership, achievement	Inspiration, amiability, caring and sharing
Life Lessons	Let go, delegate, relax, trust others	Be more responsible, finish the job, meet your commitments, trust yourself