

Parentally Speaking part 2 – January 2008

How do you determine if your child, who is just starting out in baseball or t-ball, is right-handed or left-handed?

Having difficulty determining which hand is dominant for a child is a problem that is more common than you might think. In my estimation many people struggle with this, but it is never discussed because it can be embarrassing. As children approach the age where sports participation becomes an option (age 4 or 5), their muscles generally have developed pretty equally, so it really comes down to whatever the child prefers.

If you've purchased a glove for a right-handed thrower, and he or she seems to throw just as well from either side, my advice would be to teach that child to throw right-handed unless you notice that he or she really seems to prefer throwing with the left hand when given a choice.

As for hitting, whether you are a 4-year-old or a 22-year-old professional, being comfortable is the most important concern. Lay the bat out there, see which way he or she picks it up and swings it most often, and go with that. If the child really seems to be struggling from one side, try the other side. The great thing about working with a 4-year-old is that you don't have to lock him or her into something for the rest of his or her life. There is room to experiment and find out what works best.

Remember to be patient. There aren't many prodigies out there. Whether a child is right-handed or left-handed, he or she is not going to hit every ball – at any age. Keep the game fun. Encourage them when they struggle and celebrate even the small successes. Your body language and reaction to their successes and failures will go a long way toward determining their feelings about a particular activity.

By Cal Ripken Jr.