



Thumbs Are Handy Digits¹

Materials

- Transparent or masking tape
- Pencil and paper
- Clothing with buttons and zippers
- 1 sock
- 1 shoe with laces
- 1 coin
- 1 balloon
- 1 toothbrush
- 1 hairbrush or comb
- 1 sealable plastic bag
- 1 jar with a lid

Directions

1. Have a helper lightly tape your thumbs to the sides of your hands. Do not tape them tightly because it could interfere with your circulation. You should still be able to move your four fingers.
2. Try each one of the activities below. Make sure not to use your thumbs at all as you do the activities.
3. Decide if the activity took longer or was more difficult to do without your thumbs, was about the same to do without your thumbs, or if you couldn't do it at all without your thumbs. Record the activity and the results on the chart on the next page, then answer the questions on page 3.

Activities to try without your thumb:

- Write your name with a pencil
- Put on a sock and shoe
- Open a door using a knob
- Brush or comb your hair
- Button a button
- Tie a shoelace
- Blow up a balloon and tie it
- Seal a plastic bag
- Pull up a zipper
- Pick a coin up off a flat surface
- Brush your teeth
- Open a jar

¹ Kathleen Damonte, "Thumbs are Handy Digits," *National Science Teachers Association News*, 1/30/2004, 1840 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington VA 22201



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Name _____ Date _____

Activity	Took Longer or Was More Difficult Without Thumbs	About the Same Without Thumbs	Couldn't Do This Activity Without Thumbs



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Questions

1. Which activities on the list on page 1 required lots of use of the thumb?
2. Which took longer without being able to use your thumb?
3. How did you have to change some of the activities to do them without using your thumb?
4. Can you think of another activity that would be impossible (or really difficult) to do without using your thumb?

For Older Students

Older students could use a stopwatch to time themselves doing the activities using their thumbs and without using their thumbs, and then compare the times.