

## How do You Use Your Brain?

by MaryJo Wagner, Ph.D.

Take the Quiz to find out if you're left-brain or right-brain dominant.  
(but don't take your answers too seriously!)

Number from 1 to 25 on a separate piece of paper. Answer each question yes or no. All answers are correct. No right or wrong in this quiz.

1. I think it would be fun to build my own computer.
2. If offered the choice, I had the training, and the salaries were equal, I'd take a job as an accountant rather than a job selling Land Rovers.
3. I've got great idea for a new project (such as a new hobby or a new business) but get so bogged down in all the details that I never start. Or if I do start, I never finish.
4. When a family member has a plan for redecorating the house, I want to hear all about how it would look when it's all done. We can always fill in the details, how to implement the plan, and how much it would cost later.
5. I'm uncomfortable just "going with the flow."
6. When going somewhere for the first time in a neighborhood I'm somewhat familiar with, I'm satisfied with vague directions: "Oh, it's about three blocks from the computer store, catty corner from the Dairy Queen on the other side of the street. It's that blue building behind the Chinese restaurant. You can't miss it."
7. I always make a list before going out shopping or working on a project.
8. I'd enjoy writing a technical manual and specs for a new gadget.

9. I can't understand why I would waste time outlining a plan and looking at the blueprint for building my new mountain cabin. Let's just get on with it.
10. In planning a trip, I always have the details figured out ahead of time, reservations made, and plans for exactly what I'll see and do, how long I'll stay in each place, and so forth.
11. I used a colored marker for this test and/or unlined paper.
12. I think it would be fun to conduct a symphony orchestra or a rock band. (If you don't care for music, pretend. Think about what the activity would involve.)
13. I'd enjoy choosing a color scheme for a wedding or party.
14. You carefully followed the directions for this quiz, numbering your sheet from 1-25 and didn't skip ahead to read answers or the summary.
15. I can easily remember the model number and make of my computer, car, appliances, and so forth.
16. I balance my check book carefully every month and rarely have an error. When I do, I figure out what's wrong right away and fix it.
17. I preferred art over math in school.
18. I'd rather go to the movies than stay home and read the "Wall Street Journal."
19. I drove my parents crazy when I was a child because I was always taking things apart to find out just how they worked.
20. When I buy something that says "some assembly required," I look forward to putting it together.
21. I'm not sure how much money I have right now in my wallet or my checking account.

22. I find it annoying when the financial dept. comes to board meetings. They always get us off track by asking too many nitpicky questions.
23. When I'm surfing the Web, I like sites with lots of color, graphics, and pictures. Anything with too much text puts me to sleep.
24. In school, I'd choose to take a class in English history before I'd ever take a class in English poetry.
25. I did this test quickly without thinking much about it. When the example didn't exactly fit my experience or desires, I just interpreted it for myself.

### **Summary**

3, 4, 6, 9, 11, 13, 17, 18, 21, 22, 23, and 25 are right-brain functions. 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 10, 14, 15, 16, 19, 20, and 24 are left-brain functions. A score of 12 in right-brain functions and 12 in left-brain functions shows that you use both sides of your brain equally most of the time. Congratulations! (You're probably a musician.) A score of 17 or more on one side shows a strong dominance toward that side.

### **What the Answers Mean**

1. Left. Building a computer involves attention to detail, diagrams, and linear thinking.
2. Left. Same reasoning as number one. Lots of linear thinking. Most sales people are right-brain dominant.
3. Right. Right-brain dominant folks love ideas and are often visionaries.
4. Right. These folks see the big picture first and are less concerned with details.
5. Left. Something that isn't clearly organized in a step-by-step fashion can make left-brain dominant people nervous.

6. Right. Pictures, images, and color register in the brain better than maps.
7. Left. You prefer being organized, having a plan.
8. Left. Details, details, and more details.
9. Right. If you've got the great idea, why bother with technicalities, especially technicalities that involve putting things in order.
10. Left. See five above. Same thing. These folks have to be organized to feel that everything's going to be o.k.
11. Right. Color and blank paper appeals to right-brain dominant folks. Left-brain people want lines on their paper so everything is neat and orderly.
12. Ah ha, a trick question. (Left brain folks realized I left it out of the summary and cared. Right brain folks, if they did notice, said "Oh well, I get the general idea." Assuming they even looked at the summary.) Music demonstrates whole-brain thinking. Conductors, especially opera conductors, use more whole-brain thinking than any other profession. Conductors must be comfortable both with details and the big picture, the mathematical construction of the music and its emotional content. Conducting involves crossing your arms back and forth across your body. This kind of movement stimulates both sides of the brain.
13. Right. In general, the right-side of the brain recognizes color. (The left, black and white.) And right-brain dominance people enjoy working with color, being artistic.
14. Left. You're content to follow step-by-step directions. And you like order. Your right-brain friends probably skipped ahead to the summary, and then went back and jotted down answers on this form itself.
15. Left. It's all about numbers—the right side of the brain could care less.

16. Left. Same as 15 above. Left-brain people are generally more careful about finances.
17. Right. Artists are usually right-brain dominant.
18. Right. You like the drama, full color, emotions, and actions in movies over reading non-fiction.
19. Left. The intricacies of how something works always interests you.
20. Left. See 19 above.
21. Right. You don't care. Let's now worry about nickels and dimes here as long as I can pay the bills. See 16 above. You might want some help from these people!
22. Right. Idea people often disagree or get annoyed with the "bean counters" who are concerned with details such as "exactly how much this new idea will cost" and "how many people it will take.
23. Right. The right-side of the brain loves pictures, color and graphics. The left is much less interested unless, of course, the graphic is a mathematically-constructed linear diagram.
24. Left. Poetry, even though written in lines and sometimes in meter, is often abstract and describes emotions.
25. Right. The left brain likes things to be concrete. Say what you mean. Be specific. Don't ask me to interpret.

Whatever your score, you do use both sides of your brain every day. We couldn't function otherwise. Even common activities like reading require both sides of the brain.

However, most of us have a preferred dominance, especially under stress. For optimal learning and decision making, we need whole-brain thinking—using the right brain and left brain equally.

The best way to use both the right side and left side of your brain equally is to physically cross the center of your body.

For example, if you're right-handed, put your pencil holder on the left side of your desk. Now you have to cross over your body to grab a pencil.

Or stand up and swing your right arm over to the left side of your body, then your left arm over to the right side of your body.

Do these activities several times every day. Your brain will appreciate it!

It's important for kids to cross the midline too. Helps with reading, math, even listening. You can get a [left-brain, right-brain quiz just for kids](#)

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