



How Important Are Thumbs?

The goal of this activity is to provide you with a chance to understand how important the thumb is for animals. You will discover:

- which of your simple daily activities are possible only because of your thumbs
 - which activities take longer without the use of a thumb
- what sort of human activities would not be possible to do without your thumbs

Materials: (per group)

masking tape, scissors, paper clips, zip-lock bag, plastic fork and knife, pencil, paper, balloons

Instructions:

1. Tape your thumbs to the sides of your hands.
2. Then, try to complete the tasks that are listed below. Be careful not to use your thumbs! After completing each item, write out the answers to the following questions:

A. Is the task more difficult with or without a thumb?

B. How did you have to change your usual technique in order to complete this task?

C. Do you think organisms without thumbs would carry out this task on a regular basis? Why or why not?

Tasks:

- Pick up a pen or pencil from the table. Use it to write your name on paper.
- Open a book. Turn a few pages, one page at a time.
- Pick up a piece of chalk. Write your name on the board.
- Tear off a small piece of tape.
- Turn on the water faucet. Turn it off.
- Sharpen a pencil.
- Cut a circle out of a piece of paper using scissors.
- Pick up one paper clip. Clip a pile of papers together.
- Tie your shoelaces.
- Button several buttons.
- Zip up your jacket.
- Blow up a balloon and tie it.
- Close a zip-lock bag.