



### Daily Dose of Science Challenge: Cats

**Question:** Does your cat prefer using its left or right paw?

**Background:** Like humans, cats prefer using one paw over the other. Scientists have found that there is no dominant preference across a population like there is in humans, but there is individual preference. Male cats are more likely to prefer to use their left paw while female cats are more likely to use their right paw.

**Activity:**

Suggested materials:

- At least 1 cat (can also be done with dogs!)
- Toys
- Cat treats
- A bowl

**Vocabulary** to incorporate into this lesson:

- Lateral bias

**Procedure:**

1. Observe your cat's movements. Is there a paw that it tends to step up or down stairs with? Does it favor one paw to step into the litter box? If your cat scratches at a door or window, does it have a paw it prefers?
2. Make a hypothesis based on your observations.
3. Place a treat under a bowl. Note which paw your cat uses to try to move the bowl.
4. Place a treat under the couch or another piece of furniture just out of kitty's reach. Note which paw they use to try to get the treat.
5. Dangle a toy near the cat's face. Note which paw they bat at the toy with first.
6. If your cat knows how to shake, note which paw they offer (better suited for dogs).

**Explain:**

Was your hypothesis correct? Did your cat have an obvious preference or did they use both paws equally?

**Extension:**

Why do we care which paw our pets prefer? There is some evidence that animals who prefer their left paw or show no preference have a stronger fear/aggression response. This can be helpful in potentially stressful situations to understand how your pet may react.

**Connect with us:**

Send us photos/videos of you and your furry friends!

**Additional resources:**

<https://www.litter-robot.com/blog/2018/08/13/are-cats-right-or-left-pawed/>

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/cats-can-be-right-or-left-pawed-180967930/>

