

How Important Are Your Thumbs?

Observe your hands. Move your thumbs and other fingers. Your thumbs do not move like your other fingers. Your thumbs are separated from your other fingers. This allows you to hold things. In biology, which is the study of living things, the human thumb has a special name. It is called an *opposable thumb* because it can be moved around to touch your other fingers.



You Will Need
tape

What to Do

1. Try some of these everyday tasks and observe your thumbs: write your name, pick up a coin, pick up a paper cup, turn a doorknob, use a zipper, button and unbutton clothing, and tie shoe laces.
2. Have a partner **lightly** tape your thumbs to the sides of your hands as shown in the photo. **Do not tape them tightly.**
3. Repeat the same everyday tasks. Is it harder to do the tasks? Are there some tasks you can't do?

What Happened?

You now realized the importance of your thumbs in doing everyday activities. Thumbs move in different directions, different angles, and can touch the tips of your other fingers.

On the Internet

Here is a site where you can use your mouse and move to different parts of a hand. You will see an x-ray of the hand. Just follow the directions.

<http://www.colorado.edu/physics/2000/xray/index.html>

More About the Opposable Thumb

Can you find the names of other mammals that have opposable thumbs?