Left handers

1 Read the article and match the paragraphs (A- I) with the summary sentences (1-10) below. One summary sentence is not needed.

1 Problems caused by equipment designed for right-handers

2 A genetic basis to left-handedness

3 Physical punishment.

4 Some well-known left-handers.

5 Linguistic discrimination

6 Advantages of being left-handed.

7 Events held on Left Hander's

Day. **8** Health and longevity issues

9 The purpose of Left Hander's Day.

10 Some possible reasons for left-handers doing well in life.

Left handers

A 13th August is Left Handers' Day, a day when Left Handers everywhere can celebrate being left handed, and raise awareness of the advantages and disadvantages. The Left Handers' Club, formed in 1990, who started the day in 1992, are keen to remind people that there certainly are some positive points.

B A recent study from the US National Bureau of Economic research showed that for graduates, the earning power of left handed men was 15% greater than that of right-handed men. For some reason, left-handed women do not show the same increased earning power. However, both left-handed men and left-handed women have been shown to be more creative, better able to adapt to new situations, and even better at driving! According to the UK Automobile Association, left handed drivers are more likely to pass their tests first time.

C No surprise then that the famous Brazilian racing driver, Ayrton Senna, was left handed, as well as Buzz Aldrin, who piloted the first spacecraft to reach the moon (plus, of course, Chewbacca, the Millenium Falcon pilot in Star Wars!) Although left-handers make up around 10% of the population, five out of the last eight American presidents were also left-handed: Clinton, George Bush senior, Reagan, Ford and Obama.

D It may be that lefties are successful *because* of their challenges. They are used to having to think outside the box, and find their way around a problem. There is also a suggestion that left-handers use the right side of their brain more, leading to greater creativity and flexibility.

E However, the 60,000 members of the Left Handers' Club, also like to use Left handers' Day to remind people of some of the difficulties faced by left handers. Not least the practical difficulties. Many simple

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everyday tasks are made unnecessarily tricky in a world designed for right-handed people. Some of these are fairly obvious: lefties need specially designed scissors and computer mouses, for example. But what about computer keyboards, where the number pad is always on the right, or ticket barriers on the underground, where the ticket has to be scanned on the right?

F Left handers are reportedly more likely to have allergies, migraines and insomnia. And, worst of all, there is some evidence that lefties die earlier. No-one is quite sure why this might be the case, but it may simply be the difficulties and dangers of living in a right-handed world, leading to more accidents.

G And there is still quite a lot of prejudice against left-handers. The roots of this can be seen in the language itself. The word sinister, meaning harmful or evil, comes from the Latin for left. In French, gauche means clumsy as well as left. The English word left comes from the Old English *'lyft'*, meaning idle, weak, or useless. Similar things are found in languages right across the globe. Right on the other hand, means correct or justified, and the Latin word for right, '*dexter*', is the root word for 'dexterous' or skilful, capable, talented. The left hand is often considered unclean, making life very difficult for those who would naturally use it to eat.

H In the past children were often beaten for using their left hands, or would have their left hand tied up and be forced to use their right hand. It is believed that the British King George VI developed a stutter (as shown in the film The King's Speech) as a result of such treatment.

I Interestingly, the number of left-handers appears to be increasing. In the UK, 13% per cent of men and 11% cent of women are now left handed, compared to less than 3% of either sex a century ago. Scientists believe that this is simply due to the natural tendency to be left handed becoming more acceptable. In other words, more people are willing to accept and admit to being left handed. It is clear that, like the colour of your eyes or hair, your height or your ability to sing in tune, left-handedness is part of the natural variability in human beings.

2 Read the article again and decide if the following statements are True or False according to the text. Correct any false statements.

1. Left Handed Day was first celebrated in 1990.
2. Left-handed women earn more than right-handed women.
3. Left-handed drivers learn to drive more quickly than right-handed drivers.
4. Left-handers are more creative because they use the left side of the brain.
5. Only Latinate languages give the word 'left' a negative connotation.
6. King George VI was left-handed.
7. More people are naturally left-handed nowadays than in the past.

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