Fingerprints

No two fingerprints are exactly alike. But how is each one unique? Here’s a way to find out!

1. In order to see your fingerprint, you need to make a print of it. Take a pencil and scribble on a piece of paper until you have a big black mark. Then firmly press your index finger (the one next to your thumb) in the mark, and rock it gently side to side.

2. Now get some clear tape. Put a piece of it over your finger, press down (don’t rub!), and pull the tape off. Then attach the tape to the fingerprint chart. Look at it closely. What type of fingerprint do you have? A whorl, arch, loop, or something else? Write it on the chart.

3. Collect your friends’ fingerprints and attach them to the chart. How many kids have loops, whorls, or arches? What was the most frequent type of fingerprint among you and your friends? Visit ZOOM online at pbskids.org/zoom/activities/sci/ to enter your results and see how they compare to ZOOMers across the nation!

Science Scoop
What makes a fingerprint? The skin on your fingertip has a pattern of ridges on it. Sweat and oil get trapped in the ridges and make a sticky film. When you touch something, the sticky film gets left behind and makes a fingerprint. Everyone has ridges on the tops of their fingers but no two fingerprints are exactly alike. Scientists compare fingerprints and group them according to the similar ridge patterns they find. Most people’s fingerprints look like a whorl, loop, or arch. What does yours look like?

Sent in by Emily of Wilbraham, MA
Chart Your Fingerprintsto the chart and fill in whether it’s a loop, whorl, or arch!

Fingerprint Chart

Right Hand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thumb</th>
<th>Index</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>Ring</th>
<th>Pinky</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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whorl

loop

arch