

Have you looked at your fingers lately?

Fingerprints are the main way to identify individuals in the criminal justice system; so, what if everyone had the same or similar fingerprint? Students at Longwood University ran tests to see which fingerprint type was the most common amongst their peers. There are three main types of fingerprints: whorls, loops, and arches. There have been some studies that try to correlate the type of fingerprint a person has to some component of their genetics, but overall, the different fingerprint types do not really do anything other than identify people!



**Arch (A)**



**Loop (L)**



**Whorl (W)**

During their anatomy lecture, the students looked at the thumb and pointer finger of the left hand of every student and professor in their class. Using their knowledge from the lecture, they were able to determine which type of fingerprint each student had.

They did not have to scan the fingerprints of each student because you actually can see your fingerprint type just by looking!

Ultimately, the most common fingerprint type was the loop! Out of the class, the majority of students had the loop fingerprint type with whorl coming in second and arch coming in last. This data is consistent with other worldwide data! Because almost all of the students in the class had the loop fingerprint type, many of them started to question how crime scene investigators were able to use fingerprints as a way to identify someone if many of them had the same fingerprint type.

To identify someone using their fingerprint, there are special indicators that forensic scientists use. They can count the ridges on the fingerprint as well as look for any special markings on them. The picture on the right gives an example of different ways to identify a fingerprint. After determining the most common fingerprint type, the students scanned their fingerprints to look for differences amongst their peers.

They were shocked to see how different two loop fingerprints are from one another, even though they both fall under the same category.



Look at your fingers and compare them with your friends, you might find something interesting! Even though you might have the same fingerprint type as someone, your fingerprints are still drastically different. So, what type of fingerprint do you have?