



Activity Kit

Instructions and guidelines

Importance of Activities (for care partners to know)

- A person with dementia experiences many losses as the disease progresses, including difficulties engaging in everyday activities such as socializing, previous hobbies, or self-care in the same way as they did before.
- As the disease progresses, it becomes increasingly challenging for the person with dementia to think of an activity to participate in, know how to *initiate* the activity, *problem solve* as how to manage and set up the activity, follow a *sequence* of actions needed to engage in the activity, recognize errors and self-correct in carrying out the activity, or simply understand what to do.
- It is not uncommon for a person with dementia to experience boredom, frustration, agitation or depression as he or she loses cognitive abilities as previously valued every day activity become more difficult to engage in successfully.
- Watch our video about the power of activity:
https://youtu.be/uH_Zc0NzZ3o

Research shows that for persons with dementia, activities are more effective than medications for reducing anxiety and other mood problems.

People who do physical, social, and mental activities regularly maintain their function and have fewer symptoms than those who do not.

Talking to the Person you Care for about Activities

- Do not explain or rationalize why he/she should do activities.
- Do not talk about activities in advance.
- It doesn't matter how well he/she does an activity. All that matters is that they are engaged and enjoying it. If he/she is doing it wrong, do not say anything, just go with the flow. *There is no right or wrong way!*
- He/she will need verbal guidance to begin a task.

Disclaimer. Activities in this packet may seem very simple. Care partners often become worried that certain activities may offend the person if they are too easy. Every activity can be made more challenging or less challenging based on the persons abilities. Don't rule out an activity before you try it! **Please call us at (314) 645- 6247 and ask to speak to a dementia expert if you have any questions.**

General Considerations for Using Activities

You can post this tip sheet on your refrigerator or where you can easily refer to it on a regular basis. It is a handy tool to help you remember how to use activities every day.

Simplify the Area

- Set up a comfortable place for the activity and remove unnecessary objects.
- Reduce distractions (TV or radio).
- Be sure there is adequate lighting for the activity.

Simplify the Activity

- Set up the activity ahead of time.
- Use simple materials that are bright with contrasting colors.
- Label objects as necessary.
- Limit the number of steps in the activity.

Enhance Participation

- Choose activities that are repetitive and/or familiar.
- Provide verbal or physical assistance to avoid frustration.
- Use encouragement and praise.
- Remember - there is no right or wrong way.

Communicate Effectively

- Use a calm voice.
- Use simple 1- or 2-step instructions.
- Avoid negative statements - remain positive.

Reference: *A Caregiver's Guide to Dementia: Using activities and other strategies to prevent, reduce, and manage behavioral symptoms.* By: Laura Gitlin, PhD and Catherine Verrier Piersol, PhD, OTR/L, 2014

Puzzles

Follow General Considerations for Using Activities (p. 3)

- 1) Set up the activity ahead of time
- 2) Avoid asking if the person would like to do a puzzle.
Rather, guide them to the puzzle activity you've already set-up.
- 3) Keep your directions simple and your words limited.

Try out an easier looking puzzle first. If the person is successful and you want to buy one that's larger, go ahead!

- Ways to make the task more challenging:
 - o Increase the size of the puzzle (buy a more complex puzzle)
 - o Limit instructions
 - o Let the person work on the puzzle alone
 - o Use a puzzle with limited variation in colors
- Ways to make the task less challenging:
 - o Start the puzzle for them
 - o Hand them one piece at a time
 - o Work on the puzzle collaboratively



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Word Searches

Follow General Considerations for Using Activities (p. 3)

- 1) Set up the activity ahead of time
- 2) Rip out the page you are wanting them to work on
- 3) Only have one page in front of the person at a time
- 4) Avoid asking if the person would like to do a word search

Rather, guide them to the activity you've already set-up.

Here is a link to print out word searches: <http://www.qets.com/large-print-puzzles/puzzles-word-search.htm>

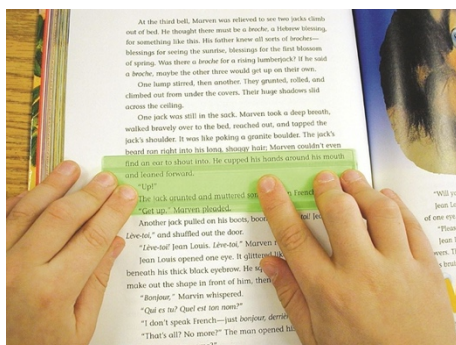
- Ways to make the task more challenging:
 - o Purchase a more complex cross word or word search booklet
- Ways to make the task less challenging:
 - o Ask the person to only find a certain letter
 - For example: cover the top instructions with a piece of paper and write "Find the letter 'p'"
 - o Help the person with a piece of paper or bookmark go one line at a time to find the designated letter

WILDFLOWERS

Find the letter "P"

L	Y	P	P	O	P	B	A	R	K	O	V	E
I	B	S	L	A	L	L	O	R	O	C	I	K
E	W	L	I	L	D	F	C	L	O	Y	E	W
E	L	E	O	R	S	L	I	T	I	L	G	S
R	O	A	F	S	O	T	B	E	M	I	A	N
E	F	F	R	V	S	R	U	O	E	M	S	U
W	N	D	E	K	O	O	D	Y	T	A	I	N
O	L	R	T	O	S	D	M	R	S	F	H	R
L	A	E	T	M	E	P	E	O	S	I	E	T
F	U	U	E	E	N	W	U	L	I	H	A	K
N	N	E	S	S	O	L	Y	R	T	P	L	D
U	N	A	C	L	O	V	I	N	E	S	E	S
S	A	F	F	C	F	R	A	G	E	N	U	S

By Evelyn Johnson - www.qets.com



Deck of Cards Match Game

Follow General Considerations for Using Activities (p. 3)

Card Matching Activity Materials

- A deck of cards (or as many cards you choose)
- Scissors

Prepare card matching activity

- Cut the cards in half
- Set 5-10 cards that have been cut in half on the table
- Mix the cards around
- Demonstrate what you want the person to do by showing them how to match the cards

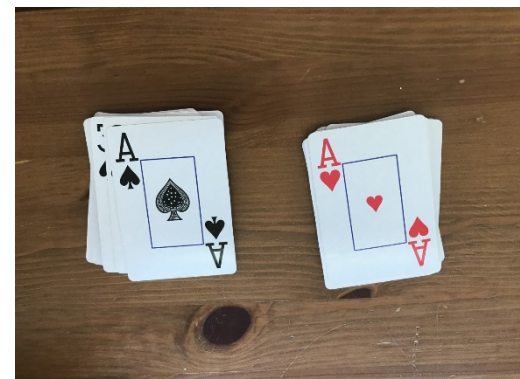


Deck of Cards Sorting Activity

Prepare card sorting activity

- Hand the person a mixed deck of cards
- Demonstrate what you want the person to do and provide simple verbal instructions
 - a. Option 1: sort the cards by suit
 - b. Option 2: sort the cards by color

Some people may even begin to play solitaire on their own!



Greeting Cards

Follow General Considerations for Using Activities (p. 3)

For some people with dementia, they want to have a reason for their craft/project. Sometimes saying that the cards will be given to kids in the hospital or a deployed soldier is enough reasoning. If the person wants more information and is in the early stages of dementia, below are the instructions (that can be found at <http://www.cardsforhospitalizedkids.com/make-cards.html>)



Here is a link to cards you can print out and color:

<https://printable-cards.gotfreecards.com/categories/color-your-card>

1. Addressing the card:

Since we do not yet know the child's name, please make sure you do not address the card to a specific person.

If you want to address the card, or writing within the card, here are some suggestions:

- "Hey There"
- "Hey you!"
- "To: a very special person"

2. Decide what to write on the card:

At the request of hospitals, we ask you not to write "Get well", "Feel Better" or other illness related comments.

This is very important since some of the patients suffer from medical conditions that are chronic, life-long, progressive and/or terminal.

We recommend that you write uplifting messages such as:

- **Stay strong**
- **You are awesome**
- **Never forget how amazing YOU are**
- **You rock**
- **I hope you have a great day today**
- **You shine brighter than the sun**
- **You inspire me**
- **Be Brave**
- **I believe in YOU**
- You can also come up with your own uplifting comments.

3. Sign your name:

Now, sign your first name on the card.

4. Mail out the cards:

Cards for Hospitalized Kids
7290 W. Devon
Chicago, IL 60631

Support our troops

- Send cards or letters to a deployed soldier
- <https://supportourtroops.org/cards-letters>

Here are some writing tips:

- Be positive. They are meant to uplift and encourage.
- Be thankful. Be sure to communicate your appreciation for the soldiers' sacrifices and dedication to us and our country.
- Be respectful.
- Be kind. Remember most of us have never and will probably never have to endure the difficulties that these soldiers have experienced.
- Be encouraging.
- DO NOT include your email or mailing address
- DO NOT use your last name
- If it is a classroom or workplace or group project, you can include a group photo.
- Leave them unsealed for inspection or they won't go

Send them to:

- Support Our Troops
- 13791 N. Nebraska Avenue
- Tampa, FL 33613.

- Ways to make the task more challenging:
 - o Have the person make a card of their own!
- Ways to make the task less challenging:
 - o Only provide the person with 1-3 colors at a time and 1 card at a time
 - o Hand the person one color at a time
 - o Create a pre-made card/letter as a template for the person to follow

Sorting (nuts/bolts or beads)

Follow General Considerations for Using Activities (p. 3)

- Materials
 - o 4 clear containers
 - o 1 bowl
 - o Nuts/bolts or beads
- 1. Place the bowl filled with the items mixed together next to the four clear containers.
- 2. Drop one color or specific item into each container for the person to use as a guide.
- 3. Ask the person you care for, “Can you help me sort these?”
- 4. Demonstrate what you want the person to do by silently showing them

Remember! There is no right or wrong way as long as the person is engaged in the activity.

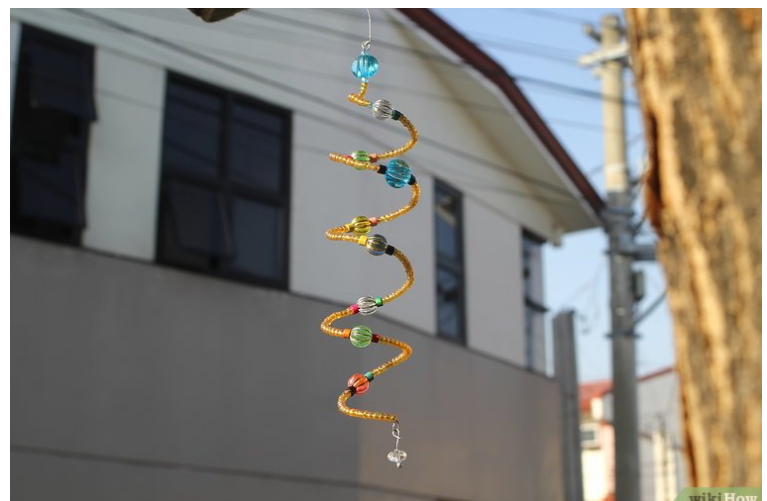
- Ways to make the task more challenging:
 - o Increase the number or items to be sorted
- Ways to make the task less challenging:
 - o Reduce the number of items to be sorted
 - o Remove the mixed bowl and hand the person one item at a time for them to place
 - o Have the person manipulate the items and move them around without a specific goal/purpose in mind



Making a Beaded Suncatcher

Follow General Considerations for Using Activities (p. 3)

- Materials
 - o Wire
 - o Glass beads
 - o Round nose pliers
- 1. Prepare the activity ahead of time and set out all of the materials that are needed
- 2. You can use one type of bead or experiment with different shapes, sizes, and colors
- 3. After your wire is filled or the person is complete with the project, twist the other end of the wire into a loop
 - a. *If you want to re-use this project, skip this step and take the beads off later*
- Ways to make the task more challenging
 - o Have all of the glass beads out
 - o Increase color choices
 - o Limit instructions given to the person
- Ways to make the task less challenging
 - o Limit color choices
 - o Have a template for the person to follow
 - o Hand the person one bead at a time and provide step by step instructions



Yarn wrapped cardboard hearts

Follow General Considerations for Using Activities (p. 3)

- Activity Materials

- Pencil
- Cardboard
- Scissors
- Red yarn (or any color)
- Hot glue gun

1. Start by drawing or tracing a heart on a piece of cardboard.
2. Cut it out and hot glue the end of a piece of yarn to the middle.
3. Continue to wrap around randomly until covered.
4. Hot glue the last piece down to the cardboard.
 - a. *You can also choose to not hot glue the last end so you can re-use the activity.*



Tissue Paper Flowers

Follow General Considerations for Using Activities (p. 3)

- Materials
 - Tissue paper
 - Stapler
 - Scissors
- 1. Stack several layers of tissue paper neatly in front of you.
- 2. Starting at the short end, accordion fold 1-inch sections of the tissue paper until the whole length of the tissue paper is folded together.
- 3. Secure the center using a stapler. Be sure the staple goes through all layers of the tissue paper.
- 4. Use scissors to shape both ends of the tissue paper (rounded or pointed).

5. Fan out the folds and begin separating each layer. Fluff and shape the flower until it looks pretty.



TISSUE PAPER FLOWERS



Instructions and video:

<https://www.thecraftpatchblog.com/tissue-paper-flowers/?jwsourc=cl>