



# ACTIVITIES *for someone with dementia*

Fun, engaging activities aren't just "extra" for someone with dementia — they're essential. The right activity can lift a person's mood, help them feel more calm and connected, and even bring back special memories. When you choose things that match their current abilities and reflect their past interests, it's easier to create moments of joy, purpose, and comfort. This guide is here to help you do just that.

Activities don't have to be perfect — the experience matters more than the outcome. Stay present, offer encouragement, and adjust as needed. Keep safety in mind, especially for those in later stages, and provide gentle oversight when using objects or tools.

What matters most is connection, not performance.

## Early Stage Dementia

### How They May Participate

- Take the lead in familiar tasks or activities
- Help plan, organize, and make choices
- Engage in hobbies and lifelong interests
- Participate socially with light support

**Goal: Support independence, confidence, and identity.**

## Middle Stage Dementia

### How They May Participate

- Complete simplified tasks with one step-directions
- Participate in short, structured activities
- Match, sort, fold, stir, or assist
- Engage through music, art, or movement

**Goal: Reduce frustration and create moments of success and connection.**

## Late Stage Dementia

### How They May Participate

- Listen to music or prayers
- Hold hands or receive gentle touch
- Smell familiar scents or enjoy textures
- Sit outside and feel sunshine or breeze

**Goal: Provide comfort, dignity, and meaningful connection.**

## Calm/Sensory

- Hand massage with lotion
- Brushing hair
- Aromatherapy with essential oils
- Listening to calming music
- Watching a fish tank or bird feeder
- Folding warm soft laundry
- Using a weighted or sensory blanket
- Rocking in a chair
- Feeling textured objects (silk, fur, etc.)
- Watching a nature video
- Enjoying a favorite snack
- Holding a stuffed animal
- Breathing exercises
- Touching kinetic sand

## Musical

- Listening to favorite music
- Singing old songs together
- Playing simple rhythm instruments
- Dancing or swaying to music
- Watching musical movies or musicals
- Playing name-that-tune
- Attending a virtual or live performance
- Doing seated exercises to music
- Gentle stretching with music
- Moving scarves or ribbons to music
- Reminiscing about favorite performers
- Watching a dance performance

## Games

- Large-piece puzzles
- Simple matching games
- Bingo
- Dominos
- Sorting playing cards by color or suit
- Card matching memory games
- Large dice games
- Tic-tac-toe
- Simple board games (e.g., Candy Land)
- Sorting coins
- Beanbag or ring toss
- Playing balloon volleyball
- Building with blocks
- Playing catch with a beach ball
- Using a fidget board

## Workshop

- Sanding a piece of wood
- Organizing nails, bolts, and washers
- Sorting tools into a toolbox
- Polishing a car or model car
- Looking through automotive or woodworking magazines
- Watching a car restoration video
- Talking about favorite cars or trucks
- Working with magnetic nuts and bolts
- Visiting a car show or garage
- Holding or cleaning an old license plate collection

## Spiritual

- Listening to or singing hymns
- Saying familiar prayers
- Reading favorite scripture passages
- Watching a church service online
- Holding a cross or rosary
- Talking about faith traditions
- Looking through devotional books
- Creating a prayer jar
- Visiting a quiet chapel or garden

## Kitchen

- Baking simple cookies
- Peeling fruit
- Washing vegetables
- Tearing lettuce
- Stirring batter
- Decorating cupcakes or cookies
- Setting the table
- Making a sandwich
- Paging through cookbooks and recipes
- Snapping green beans
- Rolling or kneading dough
- Making lemonade
- Smelling spices
- Making trail mix
- Helping pour drinks
- Sorting or polishing silverware
- Counting or shelling peas
- Make a grocery shopping list
- Look at local sale ads

## Creative

- Painting
- Coloring pages
- Making collages from magazines
- Decorating flowerpots
- Making greeting cards
- Beading necklaces or bracelets
- Tearing and gluing tissue paper art
- Painting rocks
- Making holiday decorations
- Stamp art
- Decorating photo frames
- Making a family tree or scrapbook
- Gluing puzzle pieces into art
- Making a gratitude jar
- Making paper chains
- Decorating bookmarks

## Purposeful

- Folding napkins or towels
- Polishing shoes
- Organizing a drawer
- Drying dishes
- Sorting buttons by color
- Matching socks
- Brushing a pet
- Clipping coupons
- Sweeping a small area
- Shredding junk mail
- Sorting utensils
- Organizing a pantry
- Cleaning mirrors or windows

## Office

- Shredding papers
- Sorting paper clips, pens, and office supplies
- Typing on a keyboard (real or toy)
- Stamping envelopes
- Organizing folders or papers
- Using a calculator for simple addition
- Filing papers
- Arranging a desk drawer
- Viewing simple forms or checklists
- Reviewing old office memos
- Reading business magazines or reports
- Talking about “back at the office” stories

## Memory

- Looking at family photo albums
- Telling childhood stories or holidays
- Asking “Would you rather” questions
- Page through local newspapers
- Discussing “this day in history”
- Playing “Finish the Saying”
- Listening to audiobooks
- Using conversation cards
- Looking at maps
- Playing simple trivia
- Naming states, countries, presidents

## Nature

- Sitting on the porch with a drink
- Birdwatching or setting up a bird feeder
- Planting flowers or herbs
- Watering plants
- Raking leaves or sweeping walks
- Walking in a garden or park
- Watching clouds or wildlife
- Feeding ducks at a pond
- Picking flowers
- Gardening in raised beds
- Collecting acorns or pinecones
- Blowing bubbles
- Sitting by a fountain or water feature
- Watching the sunset or sunrise
- Picking up trash in the yard
- Visiting a farmer’s market or garden
- Enjoying a picnic

## Volunteering

- Filling care kits or hygiene bags
- Sorting donated items
- Decorating cards for seniors or kids
- Baking dog treats for shelters
- Rolling silverware for a meal site
- Tying fleece blankets
- Stuffing envelopes for mailers
- Folding church bulletins
- Making bookmarks for libraries
- Collecting travel-size toiletries
- Making kindness notes for meal tray
- Making cards for troops

**Meaningful activities help people living with dementia feel calm, connected, and valued – reminding us that shared moments of joy and connection matter far more than perfection.**