



**Successful  
Crafts & Game Ideas  
for Alzheimer's Activities**

Written by:  
Anna Reyner, MA, ATR  
Lorraine Pelkauskas A.D.C  
LuAnne Martin, COTA  
Adrienne O'Mansky, CTRS

**2009 Edition**

# Successful Crafts and Game Ideas for Alzheimer's Activities

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The item numbers listed throughout this booklet can be found in the **2009 S&S® Primelife catalog.**

If you do not have the catalog in which an item appears, please call and request a free copy.

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# Alzheimer's Disease Fact Sheet

## Statistics/Prevalence

- Alzheimer's disease is a progressive, degenerative disease of the brain and the most common form of dementia.
- According to the Alzheimer's Association's analysis of national census data, Alzheimer's incidence in the U.S. will increase by 350% by mid-century, clustering in those states with the highest numbers of retired boomers. By 2025, experts predict, 820,000 elderly Californians and 712,000 Florida residents will be stricken with Alzheimer's disease.
- A person with Alzheimer's lives an average of 8 years and as many as 20 or more years after the onset of symptoms.
- U.S. society spends at least \$100 billion each year on Alzheimer's disease. Neither Medicare nor private health insurance covers the type of long-term care most patients need.
- More than 7 out of 10 people with Alzheimer's disease live at home. Family and friends provide almost 75% of the care required by patients in the home. The remainder is "paid" care, costing an average of \$12,500 per year, most of which is covered by families.
- Half of all nursing home patients suffer from Alzheimer's or a related disorder. The average cost per patient for nursing home care is \$42,000 per year, but can exceed \$70,000 per year in some areas of the country.
- The average lifetime cost per patient is estimated to be \$200,000.
- Alzheimer's disease is the third most expensive disease in the United States, after heart disease and cancer.
- Currently, about 4.5 million Americans live with Alzheimer's. It is estimated that the direct and indirect cost of their care will total at least \$100 billion annually.

Alzheimer's Association of Orange County  
2540-A North Santiago Blvd.,  
Orange, California 92667 (714) 283-1111  
Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Assoc., Inc.  
[www.alzoc.org](http://www.alzoc.org)



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Catalog for Senior  
Recreational, Social and  
Therapeutic Activities!*

# How to Run a Successful Arts & Crafts Program for People with Alzheimer's

By LuAnne Martin, COTA

Simplicity is the key to arts and crafts activity programming. Break down activities into simple components. Then, accompany simple steps with:

- Reassurance • Encouragement • Praise • Respect

## Important Goals for Your Program:

- To fill the day with positive experiences.
- To promote social interaction.
- To increase self-esteem.
- To normalize lifestyle.
- To minimize anxiety and mood swings.
- To focus attention on activities.
- To promote pleasure and enjoyment.
- To maximize functional performance.
- To provide safe, successful and stimulating activities.
- To maintain or promote coordination, strength and range of motion.

To meet these important goals, remember these three things:

- I. Planning: Plan projects that patients can do with success.
- II. Focusing: Focus on the response of the individual.
- III. Reassuring: Reassure on a constant basis.



## I. Planning: Plan arts and crafts projects that patients can do with success:

### Plan and Order Supplies:

- Order success-oriented crafts that are simple, but appropriate for adults.
- Don't select projects that are too difficult.
- Look at the craft instruction sheet ahead of time.
- Make up a sample craft, or have a volunteer make up a sample.
- Keep samples on display and use them as a guide for the group.
- Adapt and simplify any difficult steps; plan ahead for modifications.

### Structure the Activity:

- Have a definite opening to each arts and crafts session.
- Work on a project for 15 minutes, then take a break before resuming.
- Vary quiet and active activities; break with a quick exercise.
- Never offer more than two choices.
- Work at their cognitive level.
- Demonstrate each step several times.
- Make certain you've simplified all complex steps.
- Reassure, encourage and praise.
- Have a definite closing to each session.

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## **II. Focusing: Focus on the response of each individual, not the activity itself:**

As simple or obvious as this may sound, after we've "done our homework" by carefully selecting and ordering a craft project we think will be a good one, we sometimes have a tendency to place too much focus on finishing the craft project successfully. This may lead us to focus more on the project itself, rather than on each individual's response to the activity.

### **Some tips on how to overcome this:**

- Be a trained observer; be varied and flexible in your approach.
- Place your craft sample in the center of the group and discuss it.
- Describe each step of the project as it is performed.
- If patients won't sit down, pace with them or talk with them.
- Provide social contact so they may begin to trust you more.
- If people are too restless to sit down to a task, change to something more active and come back to crafts later.
- If someone gets up and leaves the group, they may simply not understand the task being presented. Simplify and reassure.

## **III. Reassuring: Reassure on a constant basis:**

- Offer a reassuring touch; place your hand on a knee; hold hands.
- Recognize each individual's presence and participation.
- Let them know each one of them is special.
- Often they will stay in the group because they feel recognized and affirmed.
- Laugh with them and show your own emotions and compassion.

### **Other Important Things To Know:**

In moments of lucid thinking, Alzheimer's patients are more aware of their loss than at other times. In these moments old hobbies may prove frustrating.

Their moods, behavior and skill levels change constantly. An activity or approach that works one time may not work the next. Be flexible. Try something different, or try later on.

Rushing a person will foster resistance and agitation. Be patient.

Distraction, rather than confrontation, proves more effective.

Do things or ask questions one at a time to avoid confusion.

When a person becomes agitated:

Respond calmly.

Remove him/her from the stimulus of others.

One-on-one interaction is usually imperative.

Use distraction and change the environment.

Walking and gross motor activities can be helpful.

Attempt to determine what precipitated the event.

Divert - Encourage - Divert - Praise - Divert - Reassure.

*Find our Workstation Cabinet on page 132 in S&S Primelife®.*

# Let's Have Fun with Therapeutic Activities

By Lorraine Pelkauskas, A.D.C.  
and Anna Reyner, MA, A.T.R.

As recreation professionals, we know that everyone needs stimuli — recreational, social, physical and intellectual. Participants with dementia disorders need this stimuli even more. While the need for stimulation is still viable, people with dementia generally cannot recreate or create by themselves. They require assistance.

We provide this assistance by picking activities that will arouse interest or motivate participants to get involved. We also schedule activities to fit their needs. This can be challenging, since the needs of people with dementia disorders vary so greatly. A good recreation staff will be well prepared.

When is the best time for activity programming to happen? Periodically throughout the day, as long as participants will tolerate activities. We all know that the stages of our Alzheimer's/dementia population vary. Therefore, depending on what stage each person is in, group activity must be limited by size. To determine the size of the group, use this general guideline:

<b><u>Dementia Stage</u></b>	<b><u>Group Participant Size</u></b>	<b><u>Number of Staff</u></b>
Early Stages	8-10 Participants Maximum	2 or 3 Staff/Volunteers
Middle Stages	3-5 Participants Maximum	1 or 2 Staff/Volunteers
Late Stages	Usually 1:1 Participant:Staff	1 Staff

Often, different stages are grouped together in a population, making it more challenging to select crafts or games that everyone in the group can do. In many settings where activity professionals work, the dementia population is grouped together with other frail elderly who do not have any form of dementia. Whether people with dementia are grouped together or integrated with other frail elderly populations, the recreation/activity professional must create a group activity that benefits everyone. Achieve this by separating a project into tasks that each person can accomplish and enjoy at their own cognitive level.

Nearly all craft activities involve multiple steps, some of which are easier than others. The activity professional working with dementia populations with mixed ability levels can benefit from breaking craft activities down into several steps. That way everyone is involved and working cooperatively towards a common goal. Mid- or later-stage dementia participants can find simple sorting tasks in almost any craft activity. For example, a tile trivet craft project might involve four basic tasks: sorting the tiles, planning the design, gluing down the tiles and mixing/pouring the grout. These steps can be "graded" by difficulty and assigned to different people in the group, depending on their cognitive ability level. This almost guarantees success, especially when the ratio of staff or volunteer involvement remains at the appropriate range suggested above.

These same principles apply for people with dementia who are cared for in a variety of settings. Recreation activities can and should happen anywhere a dementia/Alzheimer's patient is: at home or out for a visit, at senior centers, at adult day care centers and in nursing facilities.

*Friendly, Fast Service! S&S® ships all in-stock items within 24 hours.*

## **Why S&S Primelife® Arts & Crafts with Dementia Populations?**

Arts and crafts provide a sense of purpose, socialization, non-competitive interaction, tactile and visual stimulation and most importantly, a feeling of belonging. Craft kits are typically easy-to-complete, success-oriented projects with most of the material preparation done for you, allowing you to focus your energy on the group itself. Most programs will want to include both craft group packs and basic art supplies in their arts and crafts programming. By combining craft kits with basic art supplies, you can vary your program to include both structured projects and open-ended creativity with no specific end product. It's always good to offer variety, and it is therapeutically appropriate to offer a range of structured and unstructured activities. Craft kits are structured, but no two projects will look alike and there is plenty of room for individuality in how clients decorate their projects.

Simple crafts have the advantage of being success-oriented and functional. Nearly all of the crafts in the following list can be used for room decorations, gifts, jewelry, or to serve some other practical purpose. Before beginning a craft group, try reminding people of the purpose behind what they are making. Craft time should be perceived as purposeful activity, not a pastime or (much worse) a waste of time! Remind people that their projects will hang in their rooms, be a pillow to give to a grandchild, be a pin to wear at an upcoming holiday, etc. If you can't think of any purpose for a craft other than pleasure or social interaction, point out that crafts help exercise their hearts, hands and minds, or that this craft project is provided to help them relax or practice their concentration. Whatever your goal is, remind them that craft projects are much more than busywork! If they see you have a goal in mind, they are more likely to feel that the project has both purpose and dignity.

## **S&S Primelife® Group Packs: Activity Director Tested**

S&S® Worldwide provides a wide range of products that are well-suited for work with dementia populations. They have asked me to include some of my favorites in a listing here, so that other activity professionals might benefit from the trial and error I went through in discovering what works best. These specific products are ones that I have used time and time again with tremendous success. S&S Primelife® has informative icons on completion time for each product. They are products that have been created by S&S® Worldwide and are available through their catalogs. See below for products shown in the S&S Primelife® Catalog.

1) Snuggle Zoo Gang™	Sewing and stuffing a cute small pillow.	ST2192
2) Squish Art	Very easy, very creative.	GP231
3) Honeycomb Place Mat	Simple; if mistakes are made, try again.	GP3
4) Abstract Art Pack	Staff-assisted project 1:2 ratio. Creative!	GP43
5) Small Wooden Boxes	Painting Project	GP1776
6) Wood Flower Pot	Painting Project	GP1966

*Visit our website for great specials! [www.ssw.com](http://www.ssw.com)*

## Stocking and Using Basic Art Supplies

Having bulk supplies of arts and crafts materials is useful in many ways. Stock a range of materials with different sensory stimulation properties. Many basic art materials are highly stimulating to sight and touch, and some are stimulating to smell, as well. Use basic supplies for all levels or stages of dementia. Later stages will find good sensory stimulation exercises in simple sorting projects with pompons, beads, colored macaroni, etc. Sort these objects by either color or shape. Placing stickers on colored paper can be constructive for middle and later stages. If the level and ability is a bit higher, you can decorate a white cigar box with colored glue, colored rice and colored macaroni.

Sandpaper is always useful for men (and some women, too!) who associate only with former life activity. Keep leftover pieces of wood on hand and let people sand as long as they like. When they believe they are finished, ask if they would like to stain, paint or decorate their project. Of course, remember to use non-toxic paints, as this population tends to put items in their mouth.

Have fun with glitter fabric paint. Usually the fabric used must be precut by staff or volunteers in advance. Make an easy sample to follow, but allow imaginations to unfold. With open-ended projects, it's especially important to stress the "doing" or the process, not the finished product.

Construction paper may also be used in many different ways. Cut it into strips for each person to decorate, then join them together into a paper chain or weave them into a mat. You can also make a wonderful picture on construction paper using colored glue, chenille stems and sequins.

Beads and lacing make ever-popular open-ended activities, as long as you remember to order beads with large holes and stiff lacing material that threads easily. Use heavy elastic cord (BE404X) to make beading fun and easy. Some people might want to make necklaces or bracelets to keep, while others might enjoy the act of stringing beads, but be just as happy to have you "unstring" their project for use another day. Try beads on chenille stems and then make them into rings to join together.

Get creative with your basics and compile a resource area in your activity room with magazines and books with well-illustrated ideas for staff and volunteers to seek inspiration. Lots of open-ended art projects evolve from the creativity of the staff as well as the creativity of the participants. Make your activity area as inspirational as possible by creating colorful displays of finished arts and crafts projects. If you are not creatively inspired, find a volunteer that loves arts or crafts and "delegate" this important task. By recruiting volunteers and staff who truly value art activities, you enhance the dignity of your program by illustrating that arts and crafts are meaningful and purposeful activities for children, adults and older adults alike.

### **Basic Art Supplies - Available from S&S® Worldwide**

Poster Board	Stickers	Wiggly Eyes, all sizes
Construction Paper	Sequins	Pompons, all types
Felt and Precut Felt	Craftsticks	Chenille Stems
Glitter Fabric Paint	Precut Paper Shapes	Beads - all types
Crayola® Washable Paint	Wood Scraps	Glue
Craft Foam Sheets	Sandpaper	Color Splash!® Watercolor
Craft Foam Cutouts	Colored Macaroni	Color Splash!® Non-Toxic Paints
Color Splash!® Non-Toxic Markers	Papier Mâché	Color Splash!® Acrylic Paint
Color Splash!® Liquid Tempera Paint	Colored Glue	Color Splash!® Wood Stain

Order from our S&S Primelife® catalog or online @ [ssww.com](http://ssww.com).



## Alzheimer's Intervention Program

This easy-to-read chart offers clinicians a quick reference to deficits, symptoms, functional goals, treatment interventions and therapeutic products to treat or maintain functioning of an Alzheimer's patient. This table is not intended to be all-inclusive, but a general guide for recreational, educational and occupational professionals to decrease time for documentation and suggest therapeutic activities.

Area of Deficit	Likely Observed Symptoms	Functional Goal	Treatment Interventions	Catalog Items-Primelife®
Bored	Repetitive picking, tapping or rubbing. Destroying clothing, holding stuffed animals, repetitive noises, self stimulation.	Patient will participate with accommodations in 1-3 meaningful activities per day with verbal and physical direction.	Sensory arousing activities, food preparation, place patient near activity locations, use headphones - tactile items.	Magnetic Maze 16743 Textured Tangle 16245 Tactile Dominoes 10674 Activity Apron -12486
Anxious	Oppositional to contact, Yelling "help me" or "get away from me."	Patient will participate in a calming technique and participate in 1-2 valued activities per day.	Soft music or environmental sounds, one-to-one contact. Relocate patient in a study or a quiet space. One phone call to family or close friend. Nature activities.	Aromatherapy 17065 Creative Relaxation W6612 Ambient Calm Video 16555
Motionless	Grimacing facial expressions, refuses to engage in daily activities, remains in bed.	Patient will participate in sensory stimulation activities and increase participation in self care activities (feeding, bathing and dressing).	Stimulate hands and feet. Improve positioning. Place recreation items within reach. Increase physical activity. Meal preparation group.	SensoryRec section of Primelife® Laughing Bag 16761
Communication Deficits	Mute, avoids eye contact, shakes head, difficult to understand, does not respond to staff.	Patient will demonstrate communication through gestures and communication boards with assistance.	Speak in short phrases, utilize gestures, pictures, communication board. Consult with speech and language therapist. Participate in familiar activities.	Picture Set 13409 Letter Ball 16805
Fidgety paper.	Pacing, restless, wandering, continually crumbling equipment/moderate prompts.	Patient will engage in purposeful exercise using adaptive	Ambulation or movement program.	Finger Fidget Exerciser Kit 11502 Finger Fidgets 11503
Depressed	Withdraws from social situations, cries, decreased appetite, unkempt, quiet.	Patient will engage in meaningful activity and present with brighter affect during and after activity.	Individual contact, spiritual activities, reminiscence programs and walking.	Coversation Balls 16747, 16727, 16718 HymnSing with Elder Song 16794
Lethargic out, excessive complaints,	Slumping in chair or sliding increased displays of anger or irritability.	Patient will participate in daily activities with environmental accommodations to decrease complaints of fatigue.	Supportive positioning. Shorten visits or daily activities. Schedule rest time.	Portable Desk 10380 Active Lap Tray 13538
Paranoid	Worried - refuses to leave bedroom. Yelling and arguing with others.	Patient will participate in relaxation activities and present with calm affect.	Provide safe, calm environment with familiar routine. Offer SensoryRec activities to provide comfort.	Dolphins Video 16405 Rhythm Band Instruments W6079

# Games for Fun, Sport and Exercise Available from S&S Primelife®

Therapeutic recreation takes many forms. Games offer a new challenge and offer participants the sense of belonging. In general recreation, or in a non-therapy setting, games are usually competitive and people concentrate on “winning.” However, people with dementia can do exactly what they see with these same games (push the puck, throw the ball, etc.), but approach them without care for the outcome.

Call today 1-800-243-9232 to receive a free copy of S&S Primelife®.

Product	Physical Requirement	Item Number
Floor Basketball	Throwing	GA2032
Shuffleboard	Pushing	GA2038
Ring Toss	Throwing	HC69
Bowl-A-Mania	Pushing	W2197
Dutch Shuffleboard	Pushing	W2142
Parachute & Accessories	Lifting	W2367
Nok-Hockey®	Pushing	W424
Yahtzee®	Just Shake the Dice!	GA953

### Balls

Marshmallow Balls	W4902
Punch Balls	SL868
Puffer Balls	SL9167
Rib it Ball	16586

### Music that Always Works

“Sing Along with Eldersong” CD	16331
“Old Time Favorites” Cassette	16719
	16720
	16674



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## Successful Craft Ideas for People with Alzheimer’s

### From the 2009 S&S Primelife® and S&S® Recreation Catalogs

Project Name	Item No.
<b>VERY EASY</b>	
My Garden Wall Panel*	GP584
3-D Tissue Pictures*	GP1201
Squish Art*	GP231
Large Designer Panels	GP41X
Designer Wall Panels	GP41
Tom Thumb Planters	GP543
Greeting Cards/Envelopes	PE140

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**continued:**

<b>Product</b>	<b>Item #</b>
<b>MODERATELY EASY</b>	
Design-A-Hat*	GP482
Cloud Climbers*	GP619
Still Life and Landscapes	GP230
Super Foam™ Mosaic Frame	GP1506
African Mask Plaques	GP896
<b>SLIGHTLY COMPLEX</b>	
Gold and Silver Foil Tooling Pack*	GP7

\* Projects followed by an asterisk are appropriate group activities.

## **Sensory Stimulation Cart**

By Adrienne O'Mansky, MA, CTRS  
LuAnne Martin, COTA

We have compiled several sensory motor stimulation kits, creating an essential tool for professionals interacting with moderate to severe Alzheimer's patients. In the S&S Primelife® you will find several sensory motor kits for your programming

After you receive your Sensory Motor Stimulation Kit you may want to utilize the following suggestions by two geriatric healthcare professionals. Sensory stimulation is important for people with Alzheimer's, and you can assemble a Sensory Cart fairly easily and inexpensively. Many of the items from the cart can be donated or purchased at garage sales; supplement these basic materials with a few nice items from the S&S® Worldwide catalogs.

OBRA regulations require supportive activities for residents who are bedridden as well as those who are ambulatory. The sensory cart provides stimulation for both of these groups, but fills a special need for those residents who are unable to get out of bed. The sensory cart allows you to visit residents at bedside and provide a wide range of stimulating materials, even for residents with the most severe visual, motor or cognitive deficits.

A sensory cart consists of a wide range of stimulating materials. These include things you can:

- Taste
- Touch
- Smell
- Look At
- Share

**How to Make the Cart Itself:** You can make a simple cart by recycling an old cafeteria cart, as long as its wheels still work. A simple, used cart can be embellished very creatively by you or one of your volunteers. If your time is limited, fixing up a Sensory Cart makes a good volunteer project. Not only is it very worthwhile, it's also a lot of fun to make.

You can make your sensory cart bright and cheerful by painting it and adding various types of felt, dried flowers, or whatever trims you have on hand. Use decorated and labeled shoe boxes to store items on the cart. If necessary, secure the boxes to the cart by gluing them to a shelf. Or, if budget permits, purchase plastic containers with lids. Another idea is to build three sides on the cart to enclose it. The sides can be built up to make the cart more of a "cabinet" by gluing corrugated paper to three of its four sides. You can even hang a curtain on the fourth side to enclose the opening. Of course, you'll keep the cart by your desk area or locked up when not in use, so things will remain in their places.

### What To Put On The Cart

This is just a starter list - pick and choose, then add your own ideas:



Magazines and simple books with pictures.  
Old greeting cards with notes written inside.  
Musical rhythm instruments.  
Simple, quick crafts.  
Dried flowers and scented potpourri.  
Things that shine, glitter or glow in the dark.  
Poems.  
Grooming bags.  
Simple puzzles.

Simple games.  
Prisms, color wheels.  
Religious music and readings.  
Stereo cassette player.  
Blank cassette tape.  
Cassette tapes of various music and sounds.  
Fabric swatches of different colors and textures.  
Scratch and sniff stickers.  
Lotions, preferably one with and one without a scent.

### How To Use The Cart

You can always use the cart as a group activity, but the biggest asset is the solution to the more difficult problem: "What can I do to make my room visits more interesting for a bed-bound resident?" Also, "How do I make room visits more interesting for me?" The sensory cart is really a delightful way to make a room visit, and serves the supportive role of activity programming encouraged by OBRA regulations. Since the sensory cart conforms with OBRA regulations, you should have no trouble convincing your administration to provide you with the necessary materials and budget to set one up.

Good luck! Have a good time making your cart.

### Sensory Cart Ideas

From the 2009 S&S Primelife® Catalog:

#### Description

Glitter Pompons - TR26  
Fluff Feathers - BE1207  
Quill Feathers - BE2865  
Balloons - SL2379  
Glow-in-the-Dark Beads - BE946  
Rhythm Instruments - W6079 - W6080

### Recommended Adaptive Devices

#### Description

Dycem®	24282
Snip Loop Scissors	SZ275
Easy Grip Brushes	AB3728
Easy Grip Brushes	AB3628
Easy Grip Brushes	AB3627

Everything available in the 2009 S&S Primelife® Catalog.



## NOTES

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