

Keep Your Mind Active

Everyday brain exercises for seniors. No apps, no subscriptions, no special equipment. Just simple activities that fit naturally into the day, alone or with company.

Why daily mental activity matters

The brain stays healthiest when it is used in different ways: thinking, remembering, creating, moving, and connecting with other people. Research consistently links mentally and socially active lifestyles with better wellbeing in later life. The good news is that the most effective activities are ordinary ones, done regularly.

VARIETY

Mix word games, hands-on projects, and conversation. New and slightly challenging beats easy and repetitive.

CONSISTENCY

Fifteen to thirty minutes a day is plenty. Attach it to a routine, like after breakfast or with afternoon tea.

CONNECTION

Doing activities with another person adds a social boost that solo puzzles cannot match.

How to use this guide

- Pages 2 and 3 hold a menu of activities sorted by type. Pick one or two per day rather than trying them all at once.
- Page 3 includes conversation starters that work well during visits, meals, or car rides.
- Page 4 covers how to adapt activities for memory loss, and the changes that are worth mentioning to a doctor.

Words, numbers, and memory

Word games

- **Categories.** Pick a letter and name a fruit, a city, a name, and an animal that start with it.
- **Grocery alphabet.** Build a shopping list from A to Z, taking turns if playing with a partner.
- **Crosswords and word searches.** Large-print books are easy to find and easy on the eyes.
- **Finish the proverb.** One person starts a saying, the other completes it.

Number games

- **Countdown by sevens.** Start at 100 and subtract 7 each time. Try threes or fours for variety.
- **Card games.** Solitaire, rummy, Uno, and cribbage all exercise planning and counting.
- **Price is right.** Guess the price of grocery items before checking the receipt.
- **Dominoes and dice games.** Familiar, social, and full of quick mental math.

Memory exercises

- **Photo stories.** Pick an old photograph and tell the full story behind it: who, where, what happened next.
- **Recall the room.** Look around for 30 seconds, close your eyes, and name ten things you saw.
- **Retell the show.** After a program or article, summarize it aloud to someone else.
- **Name that tune.** Play the first seconds of a favorite song and guess the title and artist.

Hands and senses

- **Jigsaw puzzles.** Choose a piece count that challenges without frustrating.
- **Cook a remembered recipe.** Recreating a dish from memory works planning, sequencing, and smell.
- **Gardening.** Even a windowsill herb pot adds routine, texture, and something to look after.
- **Crafts.** Knitting, woodwork, coloring, and model kits combine fine motor skill with focus.

A NOTE ON DIFFICULTY

The sweet spot is an activity that takes effort but still ends in success. If something causes frustration, make it easier or switch activities. The goal is engagement, never a test.

A simple weekly rhythm

DAY	MORNING IDEA	AFTERNOON OR EVENING IDEA
Monday	Crossword or word search with coffee	Call a friend or family member
Tuesday	Countdown by sevens, then card game	Watch a program, retell it aloud
Wednesday	Water and tend the plants	Jigsaw puzzle, 20 minutes
Thursday	Cook or plan a remembered recipe	Music hour: name that tune
Friday	Grocery alphabet while making the list	Photo stories with a visitor
Saturday	Craft or hobby session	Dominoes or a board game
Sunday	Reflect, journal, or write a letter	Plan one thing to look forward to

Ten conversation starters

Reminiscing is real brain exercise. These prompts work at the table, in the car, or during a visit.

- What was your first job, and what did it pay?
- How did you and your spouse or best friend meet?
- What did your childhood kitchen smell like?
- What song always got you dancing?
- What was your proudest moment as a parent or worker?
- What was the best trip you ever took?
- Who was your favorite teacher, and why?
- What did Sundays look like when you were young?
- What is something you made with your own hands?
- What advice would you give your 30-year-old self?

Adapting activities for memory loss

Simplify, do not stop

Shorter sessions, fewer puzzle pieces, familiar games over new ones. Participation matters more than completion.

Lean on long-term memory

Old songs, old photos, and old skills often stay vivid. Reminiscing builds confidence where recent memory is unreliable.

Use the senses

Music, familiar scents, folding warm laundry, and hand massage are engaging even in later stages of dementia.

Follow their lead

If a story is retold or the rules drift, go with it. Correcting creates stress without adding benefit.

Worth a conversation with the doctor

Occasional forgetfulness is a normal part of aging. Mention it to a physician when memory changes start to affect daily life, for example: repeating the same question within minutes, getting lost on familiar routes, missing bills or medications regularly, or withdrawing from favorite activities. An evaluation gives answers, and many causes of memory trouble are treatable.

FROM OUR CARE TEAM

Engagement is part of every care plan

Jane's Home Care is a nurse practitioner led home care agency serving Fresno, Clovis, and the surrounding Central Valley. Our caregivers bring conversation, activities, and companionship to every visit, including dedicated memory and dementia care. Care can begin within 24 hours.

Call (559) 296-2189 or build your own care plan at janeshomecare.com/care-plan

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