

*Activities to
Soothe
the Restless Soul*

Presented by
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St Joseph's College
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-
- Music
 - Sensory / Tactile – lotion therapy, etc
 - Art
 - Movement/ Exercise – use of props, etc
 - Pets
 - Rote Activities

Remember: We adapt the environment to the individuals with Alzheimer's, not the other way around.

References not listed:

- *Therapy Techniques using the Creative Arts*
- *Recreation Programming and Activities for the Older Adult*
- *Recreation for Older Adults*
- *Dementia Care Programming*
- *NASCO catalog*
- *Abilitations catalog*

For example, dusting or folding towels often works well with many women. Sorting old style computer punch cards or other types of cards by color has also been found to be helpful. The client must feel the task is helping the staff. It will not be effective if the client realizes the cards are being reshuffled or clothes unfolded.

These repetitive tasks have been used successfully:

- dusting handrails and/or table tops
- polishing shoes or silverware
- sorting silverware
- washing table tops
- folding laundry or towels
- sorting cards by color or size
- rolling embroidery thread onto cards
- rolling yarn into balls

Working With Wanderers

Many of the clients who enter the facility exhibiting signs of confusion are still able to walk and take care of their daily needs. However, they do not like to stay in the facility and often become the "wanderers." In the past, the solution has been to use restraints. Restraining keeps the clients from wandering, but almost always results in their deterioration to the point of no response. There is a movement in an increasing number of states to prohibit the use of restraints in elder care facilities. Many facilities have begun to move toward a restraint-free environment even though it is not yet required. In one agency the nursing assistant assigned to the client takes the client on a short walk around the grounds, or inside the facility, upon the client's request. They report having to take some clients on two or three walks per hour in those late afternoon and early evening hours, which are so common for *escape* attempts. When the client realizes a walk can be taken anytime, less walks are required. The client will often sit calmly and wait until the staff member is free from other tasks to take the walk. Recreation personnel can certainly join with the nursing staff to assist with a walking program. Since it is often difficult to gather a group of clients for late afternoon activities. This would be a perfect time of day to take a client or two for a stroll around the grounds.

Many agencies with clients who wander seem to be afraid to take the client outside the facility for fear the client will try to escape at a later time. It is difficult to argue with this logical thinking however, after observing client after client go downhill because they were forced to give up the one activity which seemed to give them joy, a walk upon the client's request appears worth a try.

A solution which worked for one agency was to install large red stop signs (similar to those used on highways) on all exterior doors. Even the most confused wanderer responded to this familiar symbol from the past by turning and walking in another direction.

Other solutions include alarms on exterior doors or electronic locators worn by the wandering clients.

Working With the Low-Functioning Client

The key to success when working with one-on-one activities is to keep it simple. The program area must be kept uncluttered with as few distractions as possible. Some professionals suggest that we should even consider removing the salt and pepper shakers, placemats, flower arrangements, and napkin holders from the tables during meals to help keep the confused clients focused on eating. Activities should be planned to have simple directions, visual instead of verbal cues, with plenty of support and encouragement throughout the process.

There is some controversy as to whether the staff member should stand or sit when working with confused clients. Some agencies feel standing helps to keep the client focused on the activity. Other agencies feel that the staff member should sit with the clients especially if working with a small group seated in a circle. We suggest that your staff experiment with both ways to see what works best for your clients.

The important things to remember are:

1. Find out as much as possible about the client's background;
2. Many of the clients understand more than they can express;
3. They may be able to do more than the staff realize; and
4. What the person can do today may or may not be what he or she can do tomorrow.

Be sure to watch the clients closely, to see that they are not stressed by the experience.

The following one-on-one activities have been used successfully with a variety of low-functioning clients.

Cereal Box Puzzles

Preparation:

Cut the front of a breakfast cereal box (any well-known dry cereal) into 3 or 4 pieces with a pair of scissors. Make a frame to hold the assembled puzzle using a heavier piece of cardboard (that is 1-inch longer and wider than the puzzle) as backing. Glue a strip of the same heavier cardboard that is $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch wide along each side of the backing so that the assembled puzzle will fit inside the frame. Laminating the puzzle pieces will increase the durability.

Use:

Place all but one of the pieces in their proper places in the frame and give the client the last piece to insert. When success has been gained with one piece, have the client attempt to place two or more pieces with a goal of finally being able to assemble all the pieces correctly.

Hint:

Make several similar puzzles from different brands of cereal. When the client is able to have a successful experience with one puzzle, use another in a follow-up session.

Picture Puzzle

Preparation:

This is another simple puzzle idea. Select a colorful picture of a bird or animal from a calendar or magazine. It should be of a size that can be trimmed to 6 by 9 inches. Cut six 3-by-3-inch pieces of heavy cardboard. Align the pieces into a 6-by-9-inch rectangle

and glue the picture to the surface. Use a sharp knife to separate the pieces.

Use:

This puzzle is used in the same way as the cereal box puzzle.

Matching Lids

Preparation:

Collect different size plastic containers and lids (margarine, cottage cheese, etc.). It is best to have several of each size with several different products represented.

Use:

If you are working with a very confused client, use one container and a couple of different size lids and encourage him or her to find the correct lid for the container. Depending upon the ability of the client, you may be able to have several lids and containers of different sizes to see how quickly he or she can put the lids on the correct containers. Take time to discuss the contents that the container held and what might be kept in it now. Don't discuss the container's original contents while the client is trying to put on the lid.

Sorting Things

Preparation:

Collect a variety of things to sort. We've used playing cards, poker chips, checkers, buttons, screws, nails, washers, socks, washcloths, towels, baby clothes and lots of other things. Volunteers collected most of the things for us to use.

Use:

We found that many of the confused clients could sort things and not only enjoyed the activity but could keep on task for a longer period of time while engaged in a sorting activity. Start with a small number of familiar items like cards or poker chips for the client to sort by color. Nails, screws and washers should be sorted by size. Buttons can be sorted by size or by color or by the number of holes. Egg cartons are good containers to use for sorting the smaller items. Remember to use large items for sorting if the person might try to eat them. The clients may not

Recreation for Older Adults

remember the activity the next day and the same items can often be sorted again. Please remember, don't dump the items that have been sorted into the storage container in front of the client!

Don't forget to keep the instructions simple, and show, rather than tell, the client what to do. You should not become frustrated if the client does well one day and is completely clueless the next.

Quilt Patch Pieces

Preparation:

Using scrap cloth with various patterns, cut out a series of quilt patches in different sizes and shapes. Preparation of the patches is a good project for the higher level clients. Cut out 3- and 4-inch squares and 3- and 4-inch triangles for a start. Use different prints and colors of material.

Use:

Have the lower level client sort the patches by size or color or shape. Be careful not to overwhelm the more confused client by giving too many choices. Two colors and two shapes are enough to start with for many clients. You should try to have them name the colors and the shapes, if they can, after they have completed sorting.

When working with clients who are a little less confused, we have had them sort the pieces into piles by shape and then by pattern or color. Some of the clients who had done quilting in the past enjoyed playing with the various shapes and colored pieces to create a design for a quilt.

Quilt Patterns

Materials:

- Duplicated sheets of quilt designs
- Crayons or water-based felt-tip pens

Directions:

There is some debate as to whether coloring with crayons or felt-tip pens is an age-appropriate activity for older adults. We would agree that it is not, if they were given young children's coloring books and were being treated like children. However, deciding on the colors and having to use fine motor skills to fill in quilt patterns is definitely a fitting as well as an enjoyable and creative activity.

Match It

Preparation:

Make a series of "go-together cards." Choose colored pictures of items that normally go with each other (e.g., coats and hats, scarves and gloves, cups and saucers, babies and bottles, cars and tires, cats and dogs). You can come up with some of your own as you look through magazines. It's a great assignment for a volunteer or student intern to prepare the cards. Use 4-by-6-inch cards and paste a picture on one card and the matching picture on another. If you want them to be used many times, laminate the cards.

Use:

If the client is very confused, start with three cards (two of them matching) and have the client point out the two that match. If he or she does well try it with two matching pairs and an extra card (five cards, in all). It may be necessary to show them how to make the match with one pair and see if they can make the second match. With clients on a little higher level, give them all of the cards and make it a game to see how many pairs they can match.

Photographs

Check with the family of the client with memory loss and if possible, secure a photograph of the person at the age he or she remembers the best. Make several copies and place one on the client's door and at his or her place at the table, to start. Several of the agencies that have used this technique have found that it works with many of their more confused clients.

Take photos on a timely basis of these clients doing activities and place the photographs on their bedside tables. This gives the staff something to talk about with clients.

Photo Albums

Request that families of clients who are confused create a memory photograph album of family and friends. They should include names and how the person(s) in the pictures are related to the client as well as when and where the photos were taken. Consider having pictures of the staff in the album also. Include pictures of the client and the relatives in their younger years, as well as current pictures. The staff

and relatives will find these albums useful in helping the person remember people and places.

Use the album with the client on a regular basis. Ask the client the names of the people and have him or her tell something about as many of them as can be remembered. Ask about the occasion where the photo was taken. We've used these memory albums every few days with some of the more confused clients with whom we work and find that some days a client's memory is very clear.

Greeting Cards

Encourage the clients' family and friends to send greeting cards on a regular basis. The cards may be of simple design and can easily be created on home computers. Keep the message simple and make sure that the senders include their relation to the client, like "your daughter, Jane," "your niece, Betty." The staff can use the cards to help stimulate the client's memory of the sender and even find a picture of the person in the memory album. No matter how confused the client may be, the cards are appreciated.

Collage

Take pictures of the confused client doing various activities. As a memory boosting technique, have the person arrange them on a piece of poster board and decorate the board with bits of greenery, bric-a-brac, lace, or yarn. Talk with the person about the various pictures and help him or her remember what was happening in each picture. Display the photo collage in the client's room so that the rest of the staff can help with the memory process.

A similar collage can be made with magazine or catalog pictures. Select a theme like a wedding, springtime, fall colors, Thanksgiving, or Christmas and create the collage. This can be an individual activity or a small group process.

Spell Your Name

Prepare for this activity by printing each letter of the person's first name on separate 3-by-5-inch cards. You may also have to print the whole name on a larger card in order for some clients to be able to complete the task. Have the client arrange the cards to spell his

or her name. Ask the client if he or she remembers his or her middle name, maiden name, last name, and the names of his or her spouse, parents, and children. If possible, see if the client recognizes the names of family members that you have printed on 4-by-6-inch cards.

See if the client can still write his or her name. You may need to give encouragement or print the name for the person to follow.

Scrabble Spelling

Use Scrabble tiles with the clients to spell two- and three-letter words. Give them a *T* and an *O* and see if they can make *TO*. Try three letters if successful, then four. Spell out words for them to recognize. Have them spell their name and yours. If the Scrabble letters are too small, make your own on cards or use cut-out alphabets used to teach children. We have even seen some magnetic letters that would work well on a metal surface.

Show Your Numbers

This is an activity that works well for a small group. Prepare 3-by-5-inch cards each with a digit from 0 through 9. Give one card to each player. The leader calls a number such as 238. Players hold up the correct cards. For your lowest functioning clients, it has to be a one-on-one activity where you see if the person can recognize the numbers or put two cards together to make a 20.

SkipBo Cards

We mentioned these cards earlier as a game that can be modified for fairly low-level clients. Here are some more ideas for using these cards:

- Sort cards by color.
- Sort cards into groups of 12, in numeric order.
- With one set of 12 cards, put in numeric order.

Sensory Board

Use carpet tape to fasten 2-by-3-inch pieces of sandpaper, felt, carpeting, or plastic to a 12-by-16-inch

piece of hardboard. This is a very good tool to use with sight-impaired clients. Have the client find the texture on the board that is closest to the texture of the person's sweater, bedspread, mirror, light shade, or rug or take the client outside and do the same with leaves, brick or lawn furniture.

We have used it with clients who couldn't speak or see and had them compare an object such as a leaf to a texture on the board. We could see by the looks on their faces when they were successful.

Sensory Stimulation Box

A heavy-duty shoebox works well for this activity. Have several items in the box (not too many to confuse the client). A small hand mirror, a bell, a Slinky, a squeaky toy, a stress reliever balloon filled with flour and a nylon scouring pad are some items you might consider including. Let the client take one item at a time out of the box. Talk to the client about the item before putting it back and taking another.

We have a larger box that we call the "country store." It has a "door" for the client to reach in and bring out an item. Some of the items we have included in the "store" are a can of soup, some hand lotion, a large spike, a bottle opener, and a corn cob pipe.

The items should be representative of those found in the old neighborhood stores. Don't forget to have items that the men particularly remember.

Bird Feeding

Lower level clients enjoy a repetitive task like filling the bird feeders. The ones that use 2-liter bottles and screw-on feeder bottoms (described in Chapter X, All Natural) are great for sunflower seeds. Use the laundry soap detergent bottle suggestion for filling the feeders with sunflower seeds. The birds love the seeds and the seeds are large enough for the clients to use to fill the feeders successfully.

Screw-on feeders for plastic bottles are also made for feeding liquid food to orioles and humming birds. Directions for making the liquid are given in Chapter X, All Natural, also.

Homemade Play-Doh

Ingredients:

- 1½ cups of boiling water
- ½ cup of salt
- 2 cups of flour
- Food coloring
- 2 tablespoons of alum
- 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil

Directions:

Dissolve the salt in the boiling water and add the food coloring, alum and vegetable oil. When everything is dissolved, pour the liquid into the flour in a mixing bowl and stir, then knead until smooth. The dough will keep for quite a while if stored in a tightly closed plastic bag when not in use.

Edible Dough

Ingredients:

- ½ cup of creamy peanut butter
- ¼ cup of honey or syrup
- ½ cup of instant milk powder
- 2 tablespoons of powdered sugar (may want a little more)

Directions:

Mix and knead ingredients into a pliable dough. If it is too sticky add more powdered sugar. Use powdered sugar for "flour" when you roll the dough. The clients can roll out the dough and use miniature cookie cutters to make edible "cookies." Roll dough into 1-inch balls and use a cookie press to make designs. Press a small amount into candy molds to make "candy."

More Ideas for the Low-Functioning Client

The following activities and ideas for the low-level functioning client are described at various places in this book. All of them have been used successfully with a variety of lower functioning older clients. Many of them may not work for your lowest functioning clients, but they can be used as springboards to help you develop or adapt activities that will work. Most of the clients who are confused will need one

or two clients to one staff member's assistance for many of the activities.

Confused clients often still want to be helpful. Setting or clearing a table for an event will often bring a great deal of satisfaction, because it is an activity that the person can still accomplish. The same is true of activities such as planting, watering or weeding a garden or flower bed. Although Judy's mother doesn't know who Judy is, she still can help her at mealtime by slicing bread, chopping vegetables and clearing the table. Don't rule out any activity—just try it several times with several approaches. This list is simply meant as a starting point.

WORKING WITH THE CONFUSED CLIENT

It would be so nice to have a step by step approach to working with the confused and disoriented client. However each client is an individual and comes to the facility with a different background. Therefore, even if something works with one client it will not necessarily work with another. Many of the activities from the previous two chapters will work well with the client who is confused and disoriented with little or no adaptation. This chapter is a compilation of ideas and approaches for working with these very special clients.

In recent years there has been a tendency to label all of these clients as having Alzheimer's Disease. In many cases this may be an appropriate label, but in others the cause might be depression, medications or other diseases. Without special medical training it is impossible for the recreation personnel to determine the cause of the confusion, therefore they must work with the symptoms.

Researchers have found that the client first loses orientation to time and place, then recognition of people, then the ability to count and finally his/her own name. The recreation professional should work with the abilities the clients have in an attempt to challenge the client to keep striving. Providing an environment where achievement is possible is extremely important when working with the confused client.

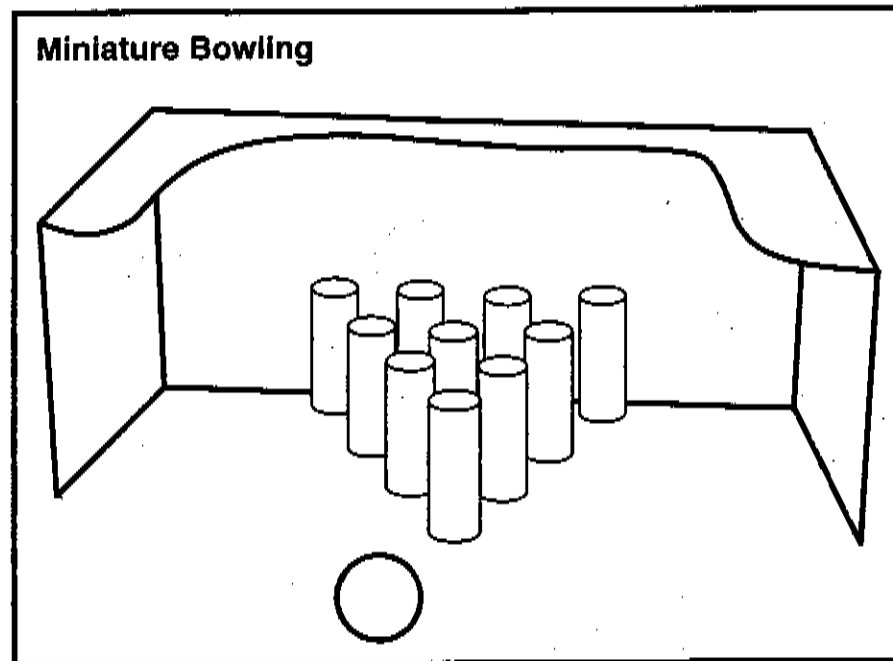
If a client has already lost orientation to time and place, then work on skills which are still familiar such as math, spelling, and reading. If a client has lost orientation to time, continue to work on the orientation to place. If a client has lost the ability to count, continue to work on those skills such as eating, and dressing as well as the sensory stimulation skills. If a client is exhibiting no response at all, attempts should be made to solicit a response to his/her name.

Using Repetitive Tasks

Often clients who are confused exhibit great frustration and restlessness. The idea of focusing on the skills they do have, is to give the client a focus which is positive in nature. Often clients who wander and make a lot of noise, or are constantly asking where their room is located, can often be distracted for short periods with familiar, repetitive tasks. Even though their attention is focused on the task for very short periods their energies can be rechanneled many times with the same task.

Confused clients often seem worried and fretful over the same problem. It may be to find their room or to get home in time to cook a meal for their "small" children. Refocusing their efforts gives them something else to think about (even if it is temporary), provides them with a sense of purpose and can help them stay calm.

It is almost impossible to calm a client down with a repetitive task once he/she has become agitated. The challenge for the staff is to assign a task before the client reaches a state of agitation. Although it would be nice to assign all of the confused clients a repetitive type task, the idea does not work for all of the clients. However, it does work for many and should be utilized when possible. The best types of tasks would include those which are familiar or comfortable.



Miniature Bowling

1:1, Sm Grp

Materials:

10 toilet paper tubes or small plastic bottles

3-inch Nerf or Wiffle ball

Cardboard box to fit end of table (cut box as shown in illustration to keep "pins" from falling off table)

Directions:

Set the "pins" as in bowling. Roll the ball from the opposite end of table. Score as in regular bowling.

Note: This is another good game for a carnival.

Fun Sticks

1:1, Sm Grp

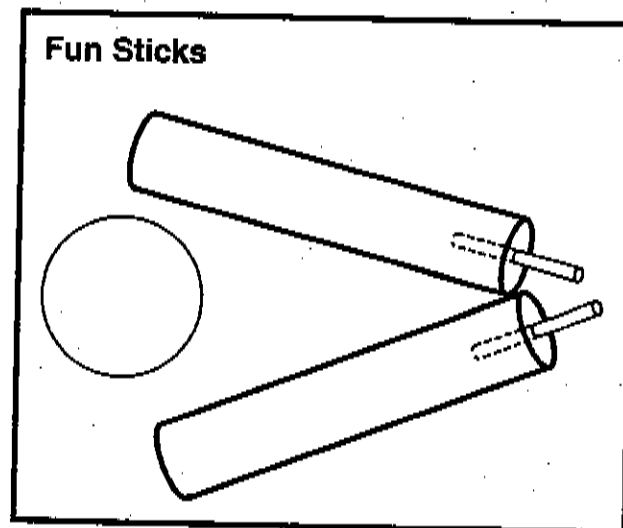
Materials:

- Two foam plastic wands
- Two $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch diameter dowels

Directions:

Fun Sticks are inexpensive and easily modified for use with a variety of activities. You will need to look in the toy section of a large discount department store for the colorful 5-foot long, 3-inch diameter, foam plastic wands with a $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch hole through the middle. The ones that we purchased are called "Fun Noodles" and cost less than \$2 for each one. You should buy at least two of them, to start. Use a sharp knife to cut each of them into thirds. You will now have six pieces almost 20 inches in length.

Purchase two $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch dowel rods from a hardware store. They will be 3 feet in length and you will have to use a saw to cut each one into four 9-inch pieces. Insert one of the short dowels into an end of each noodle until only 4 inches of the dowel sticks out to serve as a handle (believe us, the $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch dowel will fit in the $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch hole because the foam stretches) as shown in the illustration.



Homemade Butter

Ingredients:

- 1 pint of room temperature heavy cream (not whipping cream)
- 2 empty plastic jars with screw-top lids (peanut butter jars are good)
- 4 heavy rubber bands
- Table salt to taste (optional)

Pour one half of the heavy cream into each jar. Screw the lid on tightly and put two rubber bands around the jar to make it easier for the clients to grasp. Have the clients take turns shaking the jar. Keep shaking the jar and passing it from one client to another. While they are shaking the jar, the group members may talk about making homemade butter, other items they canned, and favorite memories. When the butter "balls up" within the jar and there is just a small amount of liquid left, the butter is ready. Someone will want to drink the buttermilk, so don't throw it away. Place the butter in a small bowl and wash it in several changes of cold water until the water is clear. Mix a small amount of salt into the butter and serve over crackers or bread. It really tastes great and can be done with lower level clients and/or with children and older adults.

Herb Butter

Soften butter or margarine until it is easy for the clients to manipulate. It is even possible to use whipped margarine or butter. Chop either fresh or dried herbs (favorites are basil, dill and parsley) into very small pieces. Mix with the softened margarine or butter. Press the margarine or butter into a butter mold and place it in the refrigerator until the butter hardens. Remove it from the mold and serve it with homemade bread, mashed potatoes, corn on the cob or other vegetables. A butter press can be used by letting the butter harden slightly, then rolling it onto wax paper. Press the molded press into the butter. Trim the excess butter away and then refrigerate the butter "pats" until ready to serve. If you do not have access to either a butter mold or press, use a small cookie mold or put small portions into small plastic cups. The dietary department should be able to help you obtain small cups. It is best to utilize only one herb at a time versus mixing several together.

Ice Cream

Plastic Bag Ice Cream

Homemade ice cream is a treat, but it always seems to be messy and take so long to make. Plastic Bag Ice Cream is quick to make and not messy. The clients will really enjoy the novelty of making this treat. It is a good activity to do with older folks and children together. Each plastic bag makes one cup of ice cream.

Ingredients per 1-cup serving:

- 1 pint-size Ziplock-type storage bag
- 1 gallon-size Ziplock-type storage bag
- 1 cup of milk
- 1 tablespoon of granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon of vanilla
- 6 tablespoons of table salt
- Ice cubes to fill a gallon bag three-quarters full

Put the milk, sugar, and vanilla in the pint-size bag. Make sure the bag is securely sealed. Put the 6 tablespoons of table salt in the gallon bag and fill with ice cubes until the bag is three-quarters full. Put the sealed pint-size bag inside the gallon bag that has the ice and salt. Seal the gallon bag and begin to shake. The more vigorously the bag is shaken, the quicker the mixture will turn into ice cream. It takes about five minutes of shaking the big bag until the ingredients form into ice cream. When it is the consistency you are looking for, remove the pint-size bag from the larger one. Wipe the salt from the outside of the pint bag with a paper towel. Then enjoy the ice cream. The ice cream can be eaten right from the bag or put in a bowl. You can add toppings such as strawberries, chocolate and jimmies. The ice cream will be soft, so it should be eaten immediately. You may want to add more sugar or vanilla to the recipe to suit the tastes of your clients.

Bag shaking may be shared by two people, but it means there will be smaller servings. However, it can be less tiring on the individual. Your clients may want to wear gloves when shaking the bags because of the ice. Plastic Bag Ice Cream is a nice treat at a picnic or a fun snack on a dreary winter day.

Being Resourceful

Packrats will be in heaven when they read this list of things to save from around the house for art projects. The only limitation is storage area, but this can usually be cleverly organized as well.

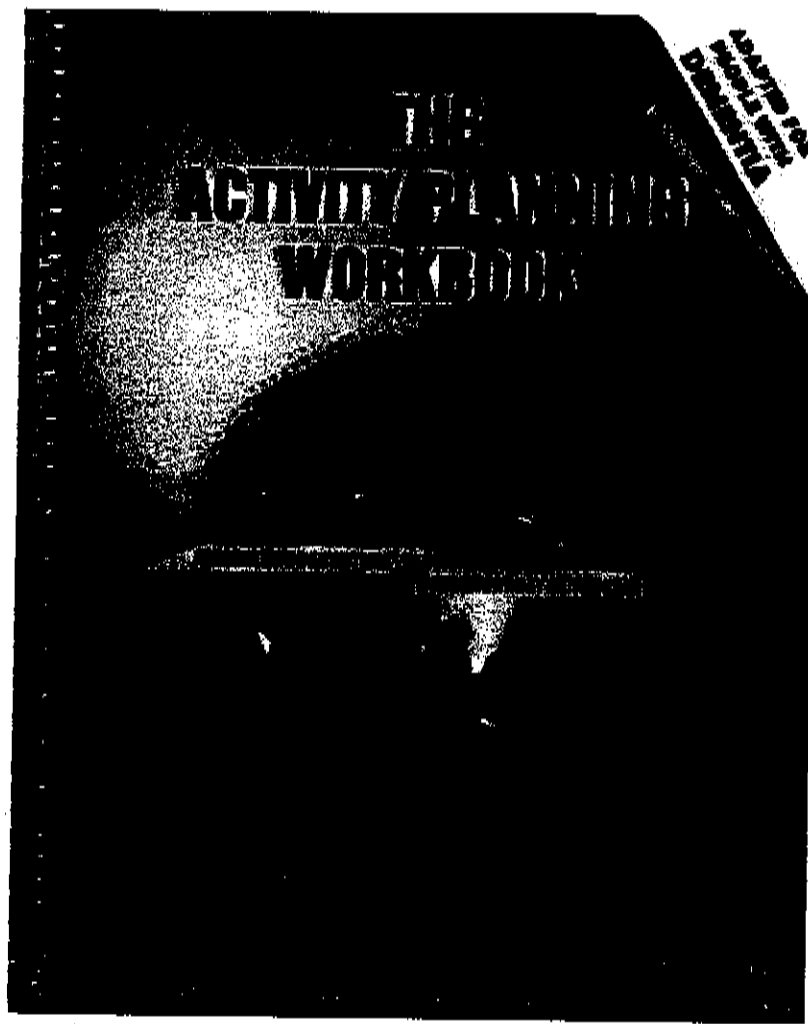
Materials to Save

- alphabet soup letters
- baby food jars
- bag twisties
- beads (old necklaces from thrift stores/flea market)
- beans (dried)
- bottle caps
- boxes (little to as big as you can store)
- broken crayons
- broken toys
- buttons
- calendars (for photos or pictures)
- cardboard scraps (corrugated and other interesting surfaces)
- chop sticks (great for scooping paint or mixing materials)
- coffee cans
- computer paper (quick, casual drawings)
- corks
- cotton balls
- dried flowers
- egg cartons (for paints, sorting of beads/sequins)
- fabric scraps (for collage, masks)
- game pieces from old games
- gloves (for puppets)
- ice trays (palette)
- jars (all sizes for storage)
- magazines (for collage, ideas for topics)
- margarine containers (for storage)
- newspaper
- noodles and other pasta (for collage)
- oatmeal boxes
- old jewelry (for masks, collage, puppets)
- old socks (for puppets)
- paper bags (for masks, puppets)
- plastic bubble packing material (for collage)
- polished glass or rock from beach (for masks, sculpture)
- rags (for cleaning)
- rocks and twigs (for masks, sculpture, collage)
- rubber bands
- salt (for use in recipes for sculpture materials)
- shoe boxes
- string
- Styrofoam (for collage)
- tiles (for sculpture)
- tissue paper and wrapping paper scraps
- wallpaper scraps
- wood scraps (for sculpture)
- yarn and ribbon ends (for collage, puppets)

Where to Find Resources

Most communities are gold mines for leftover materials that can be recycled as art. Brainstorm a list of places to check for help in stocking the art area. Some ideas that have been contributed by our students:

- appliance stores (for very large boxes that can be used for sculpture)
- plastics stores that sell plastic tubing and sheeting may allow rummaging through their remnants for sculpture supplies
- garage sales (for beads and other reusable items)
- lumber yards (for wood scraps)
- fabric stores (for throw-away scraps and remnants)
- cardboard or packing companies (will donate unusable remnants)



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