

MATCHING ACTIVITIES

Matching activities are an important way of displaying knowledge and discerning order in the world. Matching takes on many forms, and involves relationships that range from the very abstract to the very concrete. Matching is demonstrated when combining two similar items together. Matching also can involve matching items to a particular category. Matching exercises can be made to fit persons across a large range of cognitive functioning. Of particular importance in dementia programming is the fact that matching can be done in the absence of expressive language.

GROUP I: FORM MATCHING

Activity 1: Shape Sort

PURPOSE

- ☐ Promote visual recognition and naming of basic shapes
- ☐ Develop motor skills
- ☐ Develop range of motion
- ☐ Determine how many dimensions or concepts the participants can work with at one time

MATERIALS

- ☐ One tray
- ☐ A 12" x 4" laminated white cardboard template with three circles

The diameters for the three circles are 1.5", 2.5", and 3.5". Space the three circles out vertically on the template with the smallest circle on top, the medium circle in the middle, and the largest circle on the bottom.

- ☐ Three laminated circles matching the above dimensions
- ☐ A 12" x 4" laminated white cardboard template with three squares

The squares should be 1.5", 2.5", and 3.5" on each side. Space the three squares out vertically on the template with the smallest square on top, the medium square in the middle, and the largest square on the bottom.

- ☐ Three laminated squares matching the above dimensions
- ☐ A 12" x 4" laminated white cardboard template with 3 triangles

The three triangles are equilateral in shape with the sides of the triangles measuring 1.5", 2.5", and 3.5". Space the three triangles out vertically on the template, placing the smallest triangle on top, the medium triangle in the middle, and the largest triangle on the bottom.

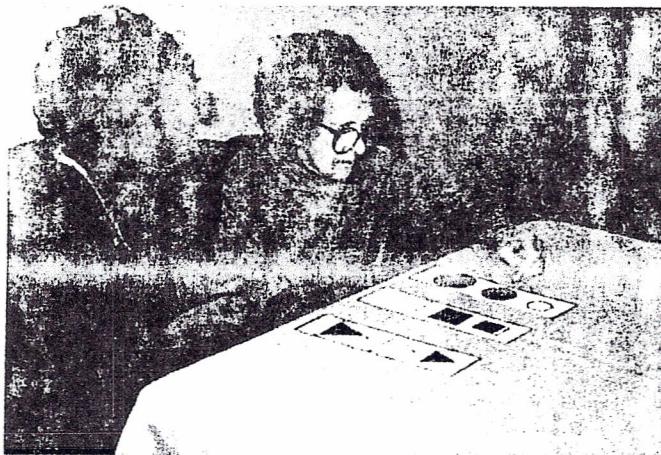
- ☐ Three triangles matching the above dimensions

All shapes should be of the same color.

- ☐ Container to hold the materials

SETUP

1. Remove the items from the container and place them to your side away from the participants.
2. Set up the circle, square, and triangle templates in that order from left to right on the dominant side of the participants.



INSTRUCTIONS

1. Have the participants demonstrate the ability to discriminate different sizes of shapes by pointing to the circle template and asking them to point the biggest, medium, and smallest circles, saying, "Point to the biggest one." "Point to the smallest one." "Point to the medium one."
2. Ask the participants to demonstrate the ability to name the shapes as you say "Tell me the name of this shape," pointing to one of each shape.

If the participants cannot recall the names of the shapes, or cannot speak, ask them to point to each particular shape as it is named.

3. Take out the large square using slow, deliberate movements.
4. Compare the first large square to its respective outline on the template.
5. Place that cutout on its outline on the template.
6. Repeat this step for another cutout, placing it on the correct template shape.
7. Invite the participants to finish placing shapes on the correct outlines as you hand them shapes, one at a time.
8. Continue repeating these steps until all shapes are disbursed onto their proper outlines.

Demonstrate the correct way to place shape forms on the templates if the participants are unable to match the shapes.

9. Ask the participants to return the **large square** back to its container.

Continue asking the participants to return specific shapes by size to the container until all shapes are returned to their original container.

EXTENSIONS

Have different colors for the shapes, so that when they are being put away you can ask participants to give you a shape that is described by three adjectives, such as "Please hand me the medium red square."

HORIZONTAL PROGRAMMING

You can develop templates and shape forms for other commonly recognizable shapes, like rectangles, diamonds, and ovals.

VERTICAL PROGRAMMING

DOWNWARD EXTENSION

It may be necessary to only use one set of shapes at a time if the participants have difficulty completing the task. Another way to simplify the task is to use only two examples of any shape (big and small) rather than three.

UPWARD EXTENSION

Present the participants with pictures of objects, or actual objects representative of the target shapes, such as a round clock to represent a circle. Instruct the participants to point to objects in their environment or that they are wearing that have the same shapes as the templates. Different sized pictures of the objects can be sorted as well.

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

- P:** Some participants recognize only one shape, such as the triangle, but confuse the square and circle.
- S:** Work with the shape(s) the participants can successfully recognize. Add the second template once the participants have mastered the first shape. Introduce the third template after the mastery of the first two templates.
- S:** You may need to place a printed label, e.g., TRIANGLE, under a template if participants have trouble recognizing or naming a particular shape.

Activity 2: Face Sort

PURPOSE

- ☐ Promote identification and matching of parts of the face
- ☐ Enhance hand-eye coordination, fine and gross motor skills
- ☐ Develop spatial abilities and whole/part identification

MATERIALS

- ☐ Two pictures of faces, with each picture divided or cut up into the three sections containing the eyes, nose, and mouth, respectively

The pieces should be glued onto an index card that has been cut to fit the facial shape pieces to give the pieces more support.

- ☐ Two 8" x 11" templates that serve as cues to place the individual pieces (see picture)



INSTRUCTIONS

1. Take out the pieces of the first face and its template and place the picture of the eyes in its proper place in the template.
2. Do the same with the last two pieces of the face.
3. Remove the first template and face set.
4. Place the second template in front of the participants and hand the participants the picture of the eyes for that face.
5. Ask the participants where the piece belongs if they do not spontaneously place the eyes at the top of the template.

If necessary, prompt the participants by pointing from the piece to the top part of the template where the eyes should go.
6. Repeat this process with the nose and mouth pieces of the face.
7. When finished, ask the participants if they would like to try the activity again with another face.

EXTENSIONS

Use new faces, cut out in the same manner. Also, hand the pieces of the face to the participants in a different order (e.g., mouth, eyes, nose). It can help if the faces in the puzzle are those of family members or friends of the participants.

HORIZONTAL PROGRAMMING

You can take a similar approach to working with parts of the body. You can also make similar puzzles out of photos of pets, houses, or other objects that are either familiar or interesting to participants.

VERTICAL PROGRAMMING

DOWNWARD EXTENSION

You may need to place the first or both the first and second puzzle pieces on the template yourself and then invite the participants to complete the puzzle. If they cannot grasp the pictures, have them indicate where a piece should go verbally or by pointing. You can place the puzzle pieces for them. You may also need to label the area of the template as a cue, such as labeling the top part "EYES," the middle "NOSE," and the bottom area "MOUTH."

UPWARD EXTENSION

You may present all of the pieces at once, in a basket, and let the participants choose which piece to try first. Also, you can make the puzzles more complex by cutting the face into more pieces, as shown in the photo, and making some pieces into shapes like those found in a jigsaw puzzle.

You can take pictures of the participants' rooms, landmarks around where they live or other familiar places as the basis for the puzzles.

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

- P:** The participants have vision problems.
- S:** Point to your eyes, nose, and mouth and ask what each is. Another solution would be to use larger pieces for the activity. If necessary, describe the piece and ask if it should go on the top of the face, in the middle, or on the bottom and let the participants respond verbally.
- P:** The participants are unable to follow multi-step commands.
- S:** Break the activity down by only focusing on one face piece at a time.

P: The participants have spatial reference problems.

S: Outline where each face piece would go on the template.

GROUP II: OBJECT MATCHING

This is a sorting activity designed primarily for men, though women could also use these materials. However, in older cohorts, many materials and activities are viewed as more gender-specific than in younger cohorts. Finding materials older men view as appropriate is sometimes a challenge, so we are using this example to illustrate object matching. Other activities that might be used primarily for older women are listed in the Extensions section of this activity.

PURPOSE

- ☐ Provide practice identifying and conceptualizing objects
- ☐ Access long-term memories
- ☐ Practice grasping objects
- ☐ Enhance range-of-motion
- ☐ Foster decision-making skills

MATERIALS

- ☐ One tray
- ☐ One smaller toolbox large enough to contain target items
- ☐ Two 2" x 6" card labels that read "IN TOOLBOX" and "NOT IN TOOLBOX"

Labels should be printed in 48- or 100-point size type, using Helvetica or Arial font.

- ☐ Four common objects found in a toolbox

Some items you could use include screwdrivers, adjustable wrenches, tape measures, socket wrenches, sockets or hammers.

- ☐ Four common objects that are not be found in a toolbox

Some items that you can use as non-toolbox items include a tie, a shoehorn, a plastic flower, or a dog collar.

- ☐ A toolbox that holds all of the objects that belong in a toolbox
- ☐ A second container, such as a cigar box, to collect objects judged not to belong in a toolbox

SETUP

1. Place the labels on the table in front of the participants one at a time, and ask them to read the labels to you.
2. Place the opened toolbox above the "IN TOOLBOX" label.
3. Place the opened second container above the "NOT IN TOOLBOX" label.
4. Have the items on a tray by your side ready to show the participants.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Ask the participants to read each label.
2. Tell the participants that you will be showing some objects that belong in a toolbox and some items that don't belong in a toolbox.
3. Hand an item to the participants and ask them if they think it belongs in a toolbox.
4. Instruct the participants to place the item into the toolbox if they think the object is an item that belongs in a toolbox.
5. Direct the participants to put the item in the container labeled "NOT IN TOOLBOX" if they think that it is not an item that belongs in a toolbox.
6. Continue supplying objects and asking the participants to place them in their proper place until all of the objects have been put away.
7. Ask the participants to close the toolbox and the other container (demonstrating with one, if necessary).
8. Ask them to hand you the toolbox and the other "NOT IN TOOLBOX" container.

EXTENSIONS

Use more than four objects of each type, e.g., have six items in each category. Alternatively, create different 8-item sets.

For female participants, use a purse and have them sort between items that belong or don't belong in a purse. Use the same procedure as above.

HORIZONTAL PROGRAMMING

Use similar object sorts that do or do not belong in certain types of containers, such as fishing tackle boxes, or briefcases. You can use objects, labels, and appropriate containers for each category, but remember to have a separate container for the items that do not go in the target container.

VERTICAL PROGRAMMING

DOWNWARD EXTENSION

For participants who can't recognize the objects, tell them what the object is and have them tell you which container it belongs in. Or, the participants could place the object in the right category once you announce what the object is.

UPWARD EXTENSION

Try sorting more abstract items when participants master the initial activities. For instance, ask the participants to sort pictures of important /not important or valuable/not valuable items.

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

- P:** The participants can't sort into categories.
- S:** Present fewer items to the participants or focus on one category at a time. If this is unsuccessful, eliminate choice in the activity and talk with the participants about an item and how it belongs in a toolbox or not. It is more important for the participants to experience successfully following directions than to make correct choices.
- P:** The participants can't hold the objects.
- S:** Have participants point to where the objects belong.
- P:** The participants are distracted by the toolbox or its contents.
- S:** Work with only one item at a time. After the object is sorted into its category, put the item out of sight and introduce the next object.

Activity 2: Cufflink Sort

PURPOSE

- ☐ Enhance fine and gross motor skills
- ☐ Develop and practice the pincer grip
- ☐ Develop hand-eye coordination
- ☐ Practice recognition and identification of shapes and colors
- ☐ Stimulate long-term memory along with reminiscence

MATERIALS

- ☐ One tray
- ☐ 5 or 6 assorted pairs of cufflinks in various sizes, shapes, and colors
- ☐ One basket or bowl to hold the cufflinks

SETUP

1. Lay out one of each pair of cufflinks in a line on the tray from left to right.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Put the match to the first cufflink directly under the first cufflink.
2. Hand another cufflink to the participants and invite them to match it.
3. After the participants have matched one pair of cufflinks, invite them to try matching another.
4. Hand the basket to the participants so that they can sort through all of the remaining cufflinks until all are matched.

If the basket appears to confuse them, keep handing one cufflink at a time, keeping the basket at your side and away from their line of sight so it is not a distraction.

You can point out the various shapes of cufflinks (squares, circles, triangles). Do the same with colors of the cufflinks. Ask the participants to name the shapes and colors. Try to stimulate discussions about the cufflinks.

5. When finished, verbally describe a pair of cufflinks and then ask them to put these back into the basket. Repeat this until all of the cufflinks are returned.

EXTENSIONS

For female participants, use earrings or other pairs of jewelry using the same procedures.

Prepare multiple sets of cufflinks.

Ask participants to name the shape of a cufflink (circle, square, triangle, etc.), and then ask them to show you another object of that shape that they are wearing or that's in the immediate vicinity.

HORIZONTAL PROGRAMMING

Have the participants sort cufflinks all of the same shape, but of different colors. Then the participants could match the colors to a tie, coat, or shirt (either a picture of the article, or the article itself).

VERTICAL PROGRAMMING

DOWNWARD EXTENSION

If the participants struggle because there are too many pairs of cufflinks, present only two different, single cufflinks that are very different in shape and color. Then give one cufflink that matches one of the two singles and see if they can find the match. Clear everything away and do this again with another pair of single cufflinks. Once they start to succeed, slowly start to increase the number of cufflinks.

UPWARD EXTENSION

Find tie clips, tie pins, or rings that match the cufflinks. After matching the cufflinks together, have them pick the other piece of jewelry that goes with the target pair of cufflinks.

Try sorting socks and shoes, matching ties, shirts, coats, and belts, and eventually creating entire outfits or ensembles.

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

- P:** The participants cannot see the detail in the cufflinks enough to match them.
- S:** Use larger cufflinks, and encourage the participants to feel the shape and texture to find a match.
- P:** The participants do not have enough of a pincer grip to pick up the cufflinks.
- S:** Encourage the use of both hands. If this does not work, have them point to show their selections.

GROUP III: CATEGORY MATCHING WITH PICTURES

Activity 1: Environmental Sorts (Plants/Animals)

PURPOSE

- ☐ Access the ability to differentiate between examples of two concepts (e.g., plants and animals) by using pictures

MATERIALS

- ☐ A 12" x 28" board, such as a thick white poster board with a foam core (see photo)

Divide the board down the center with a 3/4" black line. On each side, centered and about 1" from the top, is a 2" x 6" black outline of a rectangle. Evenly spaced on each side are four 4" x 6" black outlines of squares.

- ☐ Two 2" x 6" card labels, one labeled "PLANT" and the other "ANIMAL." Both labels should be written in large, black ink (48- or 100-point type; Helvetica or Arial font).
- ☐ Four pictures of plants glued to 4" x 6" background cards
- ☐ Four pictures of animals glued to 4" x 6" background cards

Have only one plant or one animal on each card, with nothing or very little else in the background. Be sure that there is no writing or printed letters on these or any other photographs you may use. Participants will focus on the words and not on the pictures. Also, laminate labels and pictures or cover them with clear contact paper since so many hands will touch them.

- ☐ A container that can hold all of the pictures and labels

SETUP

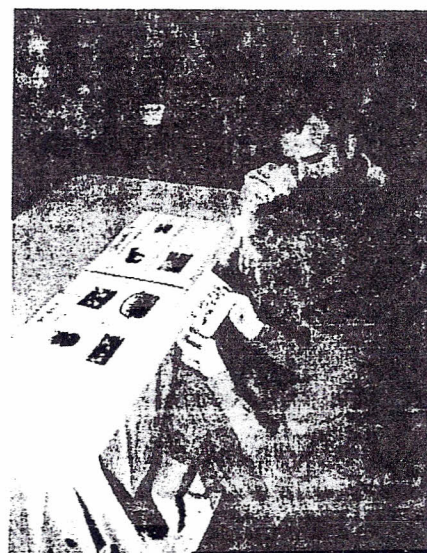
1. Place the board in front of the participants.
2. Take the pictures and the labels out of their containers.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Take the "PLANT" label out and ask the participants to read it.

Help participants sound out the word or read the word to them if reading is a problem. You might have to explain and give examples to make sure they understand what the label means.
2. Hand the label to the participants, then point to where the label is to be placed, inviting them to place it on the template.
3. Repeat this procedure with the "ANIMAL" label.
4. Explain that you will be showing pictures of plants and animals and you want the participants to decide if the picture belongs under the "PLANTS" or "ANIMALS" label.
5. Take an animal picture and give it to them, saying, "What is this? What's this a picture of?"

If they cannot name the item, give clues. If that doesn't work, say "This is a(n) _____."
6. Ask the participants if the item is a plant or an animal.



It might be beneficial to ask leading questions to help the participants differentiate between a plant and an animal picture, such as "Does it have roots and grow in the ground?" "Does it run and growl?"

7. Point to a square under the appropriate label showing where the picture should go once the participants have made a choice.
8. Continue to show the participants one picture at a time and have them place the picture under the appropriate label on a square.

Be sure to vary the sequence of the pictures so that all items of the same category are not shown at once.

As participants become more familiar with the procedure, say and do less and less for them. Ideally, you can progress to the point where you simply hand them a picture and they place it on the template. Eventually, you want them to be able to do this activity on their own with minimal assistance.

9. Continue until all of the pictures have been sorted.
10. Ask the participants to put away the pictures into the proper container, one picture per category at a time, when the activity is finished.

You can ask them to review each picture as it is picked up ("Is this a plant?") or to return items one at a time according to directions, e.g., "Please give me a plant." "Please give me the daisy." "Please give me the 'PLANT' label." Hold the container open for the participants while they put each item in.

EXTENSIONS

Make other picture sets of four plants and four animals different from the original pictures so that if participants enjoy the activity it can be repeated with new pictures. A variety of pictures keeps the activity interesting while the procedures and concepts become more familiar. You can also sort other categories. First try sorting more distinct categories like adult/ child. Later you can try happy/ not happy pictures of people's faces.

Note: Stop the happy/ not happy sort extension if the participants become upset or agitated at any time. It is important to emphasize the positive when completing all activities.

HORIZONTAL PROGRAMMING

Sort pictures of other environmental concepts, such as wintertime scenes/summertime scenes or kitchen objects/ living room objects.

VERTICAL PROGRAMMING

DOWNWARD EXTENSION

Use words typed in large print instead of pictures if the participants have trouble visually identifying pictures.

UPWARD EXTENSION

Use more abstract categories such as "Living/Not Living" or "Man-made/Natural."

Use actual objects rather than pictures, varying the level of abstraction of the category. For example, have participants discriminate between items found in their room and items not found in their room.

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

- P:** The participants are not able to distinguish between plants and animals or do not want to make a choice.
- S:** Remove the decision-making process by showing a picture and saying, "This is an animal. This is a plant." Then have participants place pictures under the correct label.

- P:** The participants are unable to read.
- S:** Be sure the print is large enough (48- or 100-point type, Arial or Helvetica font).
- S:** Read the label for the participants.
- S:** You may need to use an icon or symbol that the older adult can recognize in place of or in addition to the verbal category label.
- P:** The participants have vision problems and do not recognize the pictures.
- S:** Describe the features of each picture and allow participants to make the decision.
- S:** Use printed words as category items instead of pictures.
- P:** The participants cannot hold or place pictures.
- S:** Let the participants indicate by word or gesture their choices and picture placements.
- P:** The participants are overwhelmed by too many pictures/too much stimulation.
- S:** Do not use the board. Put the two labels in front of the participants and make a single pile under each label.
- P:** The participants decide that one or more pictures belong to the wrong category.
 This might not be a problem. Ask some leading questions, "Does a dog have roots and grow into the ground?" to see if the participants can correct their initial judgment. However, if such questioning leads to anxiety or agitation, stop! Do not correct participants. Remember, the goal is to engage and stimulate participants with dementia, and evaluate their abilities.
- P:** The participants will not return the items to their container.
- S:** Demonstrate the task for the participants. Then hand a picture to them, and hold open the container expectantly. If the participants will not take the picture or will not place it into the container, put the item into the container yourself and do so with the rest of the items, talking about each item as it is put away.

THE ACTIVITY IN A NUTSHELL

The sense of touch is employed here to identify familiar objects and tasks from the past.

TOUCH**MATERIALS NEEDED**

1 large laundry basket
Several types of clothing
Washcloths of various color

Unmatched socks
Stuffed animals
Scented dryer sheets

TIPS FOR RUNNING THIS ACTIVITY

Fill the laundry basket with a variety of items including several types of clothing. Suggested, but not limited to: cotton blouses, polyester blouses, denim jeans, dress slacks, shorts, formal dresses, gloves, T-shirts, children's clothing of various textures and work clothes. You can also add washcloths and towels, unmatched socks and some stuffed animals if you like.

This basket is brought to the sensory group and emptied in the middle of the table. Participants are then allowed to go through the clothing and fold them, placing them back in the laundry basket. If they can communicate, ask them about the clothing and what it reminds them of. Try to have participants find all of the socks, or have them find the stuffed animals. Discuss how to wash clothes or tricks they had to get stains out. Find articles about wash day and read them while the group goes through the clothing. Dryer sheets will add a pleasant smell.

*Sens-sational activities
for the Senses - Kathy Hughes*