

## Adapting Activities for Residents with Dementia

Warchol (2002) identifies these components as primary considerations when adapting activities for residents with dementia. The challenge for therapists is to begin with an activity of interest (or one consistent with a former role) and maximize the therapeutic benefit through adaptation.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attention span</li> <li>• Environmental scanning</li> <li>• Awareness of purpose/goal</li> <li>• Communication ability</li> <li>• Physical attributes</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality of work</li> <li>• Problem solving</li> <li>• Sequencing</li> <li>• Social factors</li> <li>• Ability to initiate</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to choose</li> <li>• New learning ability</li> <li>• Direction following</li> <li>• Response time</li> </ul> |
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	Early Stage	Middle Stage	Late Stage
Attention span	Minimum of 20 minutes, requires 1-2 verbal cues as needed	5-20 minutes, intermittent verbal cues	Constant cueing or unable to attend at all
Environmental scanning	Materials and supplies placed 24 inches in front	Materials and supplies placed 14 inches in front	Materials and supplies placed 14 inches in front, sit close to the group leader
Awareness of purpose/goal	Aware of object of game goal or purpose	Unaware of object of game goal or purpose, no benefit of a sample	No awareness of goal or purpose, no benefit of a sample
Communication ability	Can speak in phrases, conversational	Can speak slowly in short phrases	Can speak a few words or maybe very short phrases
Physical attributes	Gross and fine motor are functional, can walk, may get lost or ignore hazards	Gross and fine motor are present, fine motor is clumsy, will not recognize hazards	Gross motor present with cues, fine motor limited to holding objects placed directly in hands
Quality of work	Cues to clean up	Many cues to clean, work not thorough	No awareness of quality of work
Problem solving	Situations must be familiar/concrete	Unable to solve problems	Unable to solve problems
Sequencing	Assistance for new activity sequencing, can sequence familiar tasks	Assistance for each step, 1 step at a time	Total assistance to perform 1 step actions
Social factors	Can take turns, may be blunt or interrupt	Cues to take turns, may be blunt or interrupt	Minimal verbalization and awareness of others
Ability to initiate	Aware activities are going on, help getting to them	Is not aware activities are going on	Is not aware of activities nor expresses desire to attend
Ability to choose	May need help	Unable to choose	Others need to choose based on past roles and interests
New learning ability	May learn with repetition if activity is simple, concrete, valued or 2-3 steps	Unlikely to learn even with repetition	Unable to learn new activities
Direction following	Simple verbal	One-step verbal, no written	Simple one-step verbal with hand-over-hand assistance
Response time	Slower than normal rate	Significantly slower than normal rate, needs 15-20 seconds to respond to questions	Significantly slower than normal rate, needs hand-over-hand or visual cue to answer questions