



Pioneer Network™

SHARING RESOURCES

Simple is Best

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During this difficult time, we are all working under pressure, are short staffed, etc. It's easy to get stuck in a rut when it comes to the materials we use for engaging elders. Most of us eagerly welcome new ideas for activities. I have learned that keeping it simple usually works best. Three of my favorite simple Montessori materials are: Three-part cards, reading aloud, and polishing household items.

Three Part Cards (also known as Nomenclature cards) can be used to help elders maintain and improve language skills such as reading and naming. In addition, the materials can address sequencing, attention to task, fine and gross motor skills, turn taking, conversation and reminiscence. I like the variety of topics that can be covered with this material. For example, a gardener can use cards with flower illustrations, a sailor can work with boat parts, a chef can interact with cards that identify items in the kitchen. The topics are endless, and the activity is person-centered!

Often the Three Part Cards made for Montessori classrooms are too small for older adults to manipulate and read, or are covered in shiny lamination that causes glare. Lucky for us, Montessori Images (www.montessori-images.com) makes a line of Three Part Cards that have been especially designed and tested with older adults and people with dementia. They also make a beautiful box in which to store the cards. **The laminated cards can be sanitized using an alcohol wipe.**

So, give it a try, here is how to use Three Part Cards:

Purpose

- Maintain language and reading skills
- Exercise motor control
- Preserve pincer grasp

- Maintain focused attention
- Participate in an activity on a topic of interest

Materials

- 3-part wooden tray
- 3-part nomenclature cards
- Placemat that contrasts from the table and the cards

Participating in the Activity

- Carry the tray to the table.
- Remove the control cards (with pictures and words), and line them up along the left side of the placemat.
- Pick a picture card (no label) and compare it to each control card. When you find the matching control card, place them side by side.
- Continue until all the pictures have been matched.
- Pick a label (words) and compare it to each control card.
- When you find the matching control card, place them side by side.
- Continue until all the labels have been matched.
- Return all of the cards to the container.
- Return the materials to the shelf.

Modifications

- Use only three cards (simpler)
- Begin with picture cards (more difficult)
- Remove labels, match pictures only
- Match objects on picture cards

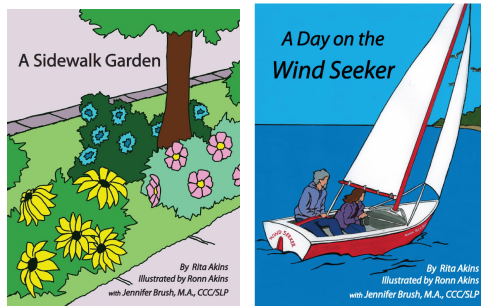
Extensions

If vegetable cards, for example:

- Reminisce about gardening
- Read a book about growing a garden
- Plant vegetable seeds
- Make a salad together

Samples of cards:





Reading aloud is a preserved ability in dementia, and many individuals, even those in the later stage of the disease, enjoy reading to others. However, older adults often find books designed for children to be unappealing, inappropriate for them to read or condescending. With short, illustrated stories designed to accommodate their reading needs, people with dementia can participate with ease and enjoyment in the reading experience.

Purpose

- Maintain language and reading skills
- Exercise motor control
- Preserve pincer grasp when turning pages
- Practice taking turns
- Maintain focused attention
- When completed with other people, fulfills the need for companionship and helping others

Supplies

Look for stories that feature:

- Large print text about topics of interest not adults, not children's books
- Colorful, high-contrast illustrations

We recommend *A Day on the Wind Seeker and A Sidewalk Garden*. It was designed collaboratively by a talented illustrator, a Montessori teacher and a dementia care expert. This engaging story about the special relationship enjoyed by a grandfather and granddaughter was created especially for and tested with people living with cognitive impairment. A question at the end of each page of text encourages conversation (see www.Montessori-images.com for more information).

Participating in the Activity

1. Invite one person or a small group of individuals to join you for a reading activity.
2. Provide one copy of the large print reading material for each person.
3. Care communities can use the book in several different ways:
 - **Small group read alouds.** A person with dementia can read the story to a small group of peers. He or she can present the question at the end of each page for group discussion.
 - **Intergenerational reading.** The story follows an intergenerational theme to interest both older adults and children. A person with dementia can read to a child or with a child and experience the positive effects of interaction with children.
 - **One-on-one reading and conversation.** A care partner can read the story aloud to a person with dementia and use the question at the end of each page to inspire discussion.
 - **Independent reading.** A person with dementia can read the story alone, either silently or aloud. Most enjoy reading aloud.

Polishing Items

Materials:

- Tray
- Placemat
- 2-3 household items to polish such as a few vases, simple porcelain figurines, teacups, or candlesticks.
- Cloth for polishing, such as a microfiber cloth or a simple cotton cloth.

Purpose of Activity

- Maintaining mobility of the hands.

- Maintaining attention and focus on a task.
- Caring for the community

Preparation of Activity (This can be done before the person starts the activity or follow the steps with them to make this part of the activity.)

1. Bring the tray to the table.
2. Unroll the mat and place on the table in front of the tray.
3. Place one of the household items on the middle of the mat.
4. Place the cleaning cloth on the dominant hand side of the elder.

Participating in the Activity

First demonstrate a step and then invite the person to participate in the step.

1. With the dominant hand, pick up the cleaning cloth.
2. In a circular motion, polish the object from top to bottom.
3. Place cleaning cloth to the side.
4. Place polished item back on the tray.
5. Place second item to be polished on the middle of the mat.
6. Repeat steps 1-5 for the rest of the objects.
7. Place cleaning cloth back on the tray.
8. Roll mat.
9. Place mat onto the tray.

Modifications for Different Abilities

- You can add a spray bottle with a mixture of vinegar and water in it for cleaning. After step 1, add a step of picking up the spray bottle and squirting two sprays of the vinegar and water mixture onto the item. Then place the squirt bottle to the side and proceed with polishing the item.
- Add a few steps at the end of taking the cleaning cloth and putting it in the dirty laundry.
- You can do this activity with non-toxic polish. For this you need to add a bottle of non-toxic polish and a small bowl to the materials list. Then, follow these steps after the preparation of the activity:
 1. Place bowl on the dominant hand side of the elder.
 2. Shake the polish bottle in the dominant hand.
 3. Place the bottle down, hold with the other hand, and unscrew top with the dominant hand.
 4. Place lid upside down on the mat to the side.
 5. Pour a small amount of polish into the bowl.

6. With the dominant hand, pick up the cloth and dip part of it into the bowl of polish.
7. In a circular motion, polish the object from top to bottom.
8. Place the cloth to the side.
9. The polish may need a few minutes to dry, so watch the polish dry together and talk about how the polish changes in color, usually turning white.
10. With the dominant hand, pick up the cloth.
11. In a circular motion, rub the polish off of the object, going from top to bottom.
12. Place cleaning cloth to the side.
13. Place polished item back on the tray.
14. Place second item to be polished on the middle of the mat.
15. Repeat steps 1-14 with the other items to be polished.
16. Wash hands together either with hand wipes or at the sink.

You can also add a cloth to this setup so that one cloth is used for applying the wet polish and the other one is used for wiping off the dried polish and buffing it away.