



# Games

Playing games can bring people together, reinforcing social skills and behavior. Keep in mind that a person with Alzheimer's disease may not remember rules, when it's his/her turn to move, or the object of the game. The point is to play a game, enjoy the process, and have fun.

The games in this section include:

- **Bingo**
- **Crossword puzzles**
- **Jigsaw puzzles**
- **Word games**
- **Tossing a ball/beanbag**
- **Treasure hunt**
- **Draw the word**
- **Card games**

## Bingo

Bingo is a good game to play with a person with Alzheimer's disease. It's a lively, fun way for him/her to exercise verbal skills, spend time with other people, and have a little excitement.

### Options for different levels of ability

You can ask him/her to read out the letters and the numbers, stimulating verbal skills, while you and others actually play the game. Or you can be the master of ceremonies and also check on the board of a person with Alzheimer's disease. One of the best parts of the game is actually shouting out "Bingo!" so make sure the person with Alzheimer's disease gets that opportunity—perhaps even a few times. And if you can, provide prizes, even if only a candy bar or a photograph.

Play Bingo as a team with the person with Alzheimer's disease. Draw the person out by asking questions, such as, "Which square is B14?" and "Can you find O56?" You can slow the game down and diminish the importance of winning. But keep in mind that yelling "Bingo!" is key to enjoying Bingo, so encourage him/her to do so at least once.

**This activity** can help memory, listening skills, focusing ability, and decision-making skills.



## Crossword puzzles

Crossword puzzles provide a great opportunity for a person with Alzheimer's disease to use verbal skills in a playful, problem-solving context.

### Options for different levels of ability

This activity works best when you, as the caregiver, begin the crossword puzzle and ask for assistance. While you fill in the blanks, ask the person with Alzheimer's disease, "What's a five-letter word for transportation that starts with T?" This is an excellent activity to stimulate verbal skills. It might get you a response—perhaps even the correct answer. Try to keep the person involved in the entire puzzle and encourage him/her to share in your victory when you complete it.

Crossword puzzles might be too difficult for some people with Alzheimer's disease. But you can talk to him/her about the theme of the puzzle and initiate conversation about the clues. Letting him/her sit with you while you complete the puzzle can keep him/her connected in a relaxed, low-stress way.

**This activity** can help memory, listening skills, fine motor skills, sensory perception, focusing ability, and decision-making skills.

## Jigsaw puzzles

Assembling a jigsaw puzzle can be a fun way for a person with Alzheimer's disease to exercise multiple skills, from decision-making skills to visual and fine motor skills. Afterward, he/she can take pride in an accomplishment and enjoy the picture he/she has created.

### Options for different levels of ability

There are many jigsaw puzzles that have vibrant pictures. You might choose a picture connected to one of the person's former hobbies or his/her former profession. Choose puzzles with larger and fewer pieces to simplify the effort. It's not about finishing the puzzle but the time spent doing it.

When assembling the jigsaw puzzle, ask the person with Alzheimer's disease for help with specific tasks. Ask for all the pieces that make up the edge, the sky, or the water — this reinforces visual skills. The actual assembling of a puzzle is good for exercising fine motor skills. Once the puzzle is done, thank him/her for the help, and enjoy your shared accomplishment.

Ask the person with Alzheimer's disease to hand you pieces while you are putting the puzzle together. You might talk to him/her about the picture or the process of putting a puzzle together. While you are working, supervise the person carefully and make sure he/she doesn't put the puzzle pieces in his/her mouth. When you are done, thank him/her and sit back to enjoy the puzzle picture together.

**This activity** can help memory, listening skills, fine motor skills, sensory perception, focusing ability, and decision-making skills.



## Word games

Simple word games can be stimulating and fun. Word puzzles and games with specific themes are also a great way to initiate a conversation on topics that might interest the person with Alzheimer's disease. You can find many books dedicated to word games at libraries, bookstores, convenience stores, or even drugstores. We have included the following three examples of word games: word find, presidents, and famous big bands.

### Word find: Options for different levels of ability

Find the hidden words in the table below. They are all ice cream flavors. They all appear horizontally. Circle them as you find them. Check off the words as you find them. Good luck!  
(Answers can be found on page 74)

To modify this word game you can simply engage the person with Alzheimer's disease in a discussion about his/her favorite ice cream flavors.

- VANILLA
- CHOCOLATE
- STRAWBERRY
- CHERRY
- MINT

M	S	A	V	A	N	I	L	L	A
C	H	O	C	O	L	A	T	E	X
S	T	R	A	W	B	E	R	R	Y
H	A	C	H	E	R	R	Y	I	E
M	I	N	T	K	F	S	G	M	Y

**This activity** can help memory, listening skills, focusing ability, and decision-making skills.

## Presidents: Options for different levels of ability

Fill in the last names of the presidents of the United States using the names from the list on the right. It may be helpful to check off each last name as you use it. Good luck!

*(Answers can be found on page 74)*

If this word game is too demanding, engage the person with Alzheimer's disease in a discussion about his/her favorite president.

- |                  |       |                                     |
|------------------|-------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. CALVIN        | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> HOOVER     |
| 2. WILLIAM       | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> VAN BUREN  |
| 3. RICHARD       | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> FORD       |
| 4. ABRAHAM       | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> CARTER     |
| 5. GROVER        | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> KENNEDY    |
| 6. DWIGHT        | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> ROOSEVELT  |
| 7. MILLARD       | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> JOHNSON    |
| 8. HARRY         | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> TRUMAN     |
| 9. WOODROW       | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> HAYES      |
| 10. RUTHERFORD B | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> WILSON     |
| 11. FRANKLIN D   | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> EISENHOWER |
| 12. RONALD       | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> CLINTON    |
| 13. GERALD       | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> TAFT       |
| 14. GEORGE W     | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> NIXON      |
| 15. WILLIAM      | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> REAGAN     |
| 16. MARTIN       | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> HARDING    |
| 17. WARREN       | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> MCKINLEY   |
| 18. JOHN F       | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> CLEVELAND  |
| 19. LYNDON       | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> BUSH       |
| 20. HERBERT      | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> FILLMORE   |
| 21. JIMMY        | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> COOLIDGE   |
| 22. BILL         | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> LINCOLN    |



## Famous big bands: Options for different levels of ability

Unscramble the letters to fill in the names of popular big bands from the past. Good luck!  
(Answers can be found on page 74)

If this word game is too difficult, engage the person with Alzheimer's disease in a discussion about his/her favorite music and musicians.

1. NNGLE      LRILEM      ACRHESTRO  
-----      -----      -----
2. YNBEN      MDNGOOA  
-----      -----
3. EUKD      LELGNIONT  
-----      -----
4. YMOMT      RSYEDO  
-----      -----
5. TNOCU      ABSEI      ASTREHCOR  
-----      -----      -----
6. AITER      WSAH  
-----      -----
7. YGU      OBODARLM  
-----      -----
8. YDWOO      MNHAER  
-----      -----

## Word game answers

### Word find

M	S	A	V	A	N	I	L	L	A
C	H	O	C	O	L	A	T	E	X
S	T	R	A	W	B	E	R	R	Y
H	A	C	H	E	R	R	Y	I	E
M	I	N	T	K	F	S	G	M	Y

### Presidents

1. CALVIN COOLIDGE
2. WILLIAM TAFT
3. RICHARD NIXON
4. ABRAHAM LINCOLN
5. GROVER CLEVELAND
6. DWIGHT EISENHOWER
7. MILLARD FILLMORE
8. HARRY TRUMAN
9. WOODROW WILSON
10. RUTHERFORD B HAYES
11. FRANKLIN D ROOSEVELT
12. RONALD REAGAN
13. GERALD FORD
14. GEORGE W BUSH
15. WILLIAM MCKINLEY
16. MARTIN VAN BUREN
17. WARREN HARDING
18. JOHN F KENNEDY
19. LYNDON JOHNSON
20. HERBERT HOOVER
21. JIMMY CARTER
22. BILL CLINTON

### Famous big bands

1. GLENN MILLER ORCHESTRA
2. BENNY GOODMAN
3. DUKE ELLINGTON
4. TOMMY DORSEY
5. COUNT BASIE ORCHESTRA
6. ARTIE SHAW
7. GUY LOMBARDO
8. WOODY HERMAN



## Toss a ball/beanbag

Playing ball is great exercise for people with Alzheimer's disease. It's simple and helpful for hand-eye coordination, too.

### Options for different levels of ability

Find a comfortable area, either inside or outside, that is free of obstructions. Use a beanbag or a soft, light ball—such as a NERF ball—so that no one gets hurt. It's also a good idea to choose a ball or beanbag in a size that's easy to handle. Throw gently and stay close enough to the person so that he/she has a good chance of catching the ball or beanbag.

Playing ball may be hard for some people with Alzheimer's disease. You may want to try throwing a beanbag back and forth while the person is seated in a chair. Another option is to let the person with Alzheimer's disease play with the beanbag or ball while he/she is seated. Or you can give him/her a stress ball that is designed to be squeezed and can easily be handled when the person is seated or lying down.

NERF is a registered trademark of Hasbro, Inc.

**This activity** can help motor skills, sensory perception, and focusing ability.

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## Treasure hunt

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This fun and easy game provides a challenge to the person with Alzheimer's disease as it requires fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination.

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### Options for different levels of ability

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Fill a box with dried white beans, corn, rice, or grains, place several large multicolored aluminum play coins under the filling, and have the person with Alzheimer's disease "discover" the "buried treasure." Make sure that one of the coins is partially exposed so he/she can easily find the first coin.

If the person with Alzheimer's disease seems unable to find the coins, you may want to let him/her handle the coins in the box.

**This activity** can help fine motor skills, sensory perception, and focusing ability.



## Draw the word

This game is a fun way to actively match words with pictures. This process can be helpful for people with Alzheimer's disease who have trouble visualizing words.

### Options for different levels of ability

This game can be played with just a pen, scraps of paper, and any kind of container. On every scrap of paper, write a different one-word noun denoting a person, place, or thing, such as "dog," "cat," or "baby." Then put all the scraps of paper in the container. Take turns picking a piece of paper from the container and drawing the object. The other person has to guess what is being drawn. A variation of this game is to draw an object that comes to mind and have the person with Alzheimer's disease guess what it is.

If this game is difficult for the person with Alzheimer's disease, you can modify it in different ways:

- (1) Collect pictures of different people, places, or things. Let the person with Alzheimer's disease enjoy looking at the pictures and then try to identify the objects in them.
- (2) On scraps of paper, write the words that go with the pictures you have collected. Ask the person with Alzheimer's disease to match the pictures with the words. Let him/her play with the pictures and words and enjoy the simple contact with pictures and words.

**This activity** can help memory, listening skills, and focusing ability.

## Card games

Card games can be fun for everyone. And, they can help people with Alzheimer's disease work with colors, numbers, and categorization skills.

### Options for different levels of ability

Simple card games and large-size cards work well when playing with a person with Alzheimer's disease. Go Fish and Old Maid are easy games that he/she probably already knows how to play. You need not stick to traditional card games. Sports cards can be pleasurable for some people too. Even sorting cards by numbers, colors, or suit is instructive.

There are many types of card games available through educational, toy, and variety stores. Look online or in catalogs from companies such as Elder Press and Super Duper Publications.

Sticking to the rules of card games may be difficult for the person with Alzheimer's disease. Loosen up the game rules by letting him/her look at the cards and play the game any way he/she likes.

Super Duper is a registered trademark of Super Duper Publications.

**This activity** can help memory, focusing ability, and decision-making skills.