Alzheimer Scotland
Action on Dementia

Aberdeenshire
COUNCIL

Creative Activity Workbook

Create:Connect

making connections for dementia through creativity

Aberdeenshire Council Arts Development and Alzheimer Scotland

Aberdeenshire Council's

Creative Activity Workbook

Welcome to Aberdeenshire Council's

Creative Activity Workbook

Whether you're a shy singer or a capable crafter, the Creative Activity Workbook is designed to encourage creativity in everyday settings, for carers of people living with dementia and the people themselves. Inside you'll find an activity for every week of the year, in an easy to follow recipe format. Some activities are quick and spontaneous, others require a bit of planning, but they are all just starting points for you to explore your own creativity.

At the back you'll find a CD of music to accompany the Music and Sound activities and a pocket to store your own ideas and notes. There's also a DVD of short films – these have been made by the Aberdeenshire Council Media Unit, and showcase the arts and dementia workshops that took place across the area in 2013.

Comprising clips and interviews with artists, carers and the people they care for, the films are joyful nuggets of inspiration that will hopefully encourage you to explore new avenues of creativity.

Developed by the Aberdeenshire Council Arts Team in partnership with Alzheimer Scotland, the Workbook is part of the Create:Connect arts and dementia initiative supported by the Change Fund.

You can download this Workbook for free from www.alzscot.org/create_connect

The Aberdeenshire Council Culture, Sport, and Community Learning & Development (CLD) teams support older people in a variety of ways, including services delivered through arts, museums, libraries, community centres and leisure facilities.

With thanks to creative practitioners –

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"Why should I bother, I have enough to do already!"

In 2008 the National Economic Foundation pulled together evidence from scientists across the world studying mental and physical wellbeing. From this they identified five actions to improve how we feel about ourselves –

Keep learning

Be active

Take notice

Connect with people around you

Give

Recent studies have shown that creative activity is a great way to achieve these goals, particularly for carers and people living with dementia, who may experience isolation, frustration and lack of confidence.

By building creative activity into our daily lives we improve our cognition – the way we learn and understand things. For people with dementia this can lead to better communication, recognition of faces and names, and decreased fear and anxiety. There are physical health benefits too; increased movement and improved motor skills, more energy and alertness, less physical agitation and wandering.

And it's never too late to learn a new skill or reawaken an old one. Many people, whether or not they have dementia, find creative activity brings new ways to communicate and feel a sense of achievement. Some reconnect with lost skills once they're given the opportunity to use familiar tools or materials. Others find skills they already have can be used in new exciting ways – for example, working with dough is similar to working with clay.

Remember, actively doing is always better than passively watching, so don't worry about making it perfect, just enjoy the process. It's so important for someone living with dementia to take minor managed risks as it offers a chance to be independent, so using scissors, walking unaided, reaching for things, are all to be encouraged. Accept that some things may take more time and you might be surprised by how much people can actually do.

Creative activity offers an alternative way for carer and cared for to be together, a space where experiences can be discovered, shared and enjoyed.

If you would like to find out more about creativity and dementia, the following resources may be useful:

Dementia Services Development Centre (DSDC) – Tel 01786 847740
www.dementia.stir.ac.uk

The Baring Foundation – Tel 0207 7671348
www.baringfoundation.org.uk/publications-by-topic#Arts

Aberdeenshire Libraries and Museums Services also hold resources linked to reminiscence and creativity in later life. Go to www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk or visit your local library or museum for more details.

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Create a sun print on fabric

You can use those really sunny days to make simple silhouette prints of interesting flowers and leaves – the final result looks a bit like old fashioned film negatives but with a creative touch! You will need to buy special fabric dyes for this but they are easy to use, aren't too expensive and go a long way. There are a few on the market but buy ones that fix using heat, such as Setasilk, which come in liquid form in small plastic pots. They are normally used with an iron to fix the colour but the sun works just as well.

Ingredients

- Pale coloured fabric – natural fibres are best and pillow cases or cotton handkerchiefs work well and could be made up into small decorative cushions or framed afterwards – if the fabric is new, give it a wash first as the finishing processes on new cloth will affect the way the dye takes
- Heat fixed fabric dye
- Plastic diffuser bottle with water (the kind you spray plants with)
- Flowers, leaves, anything that has an interesting shape
- Sheet of clear rigid plastic or glass the same size as the fabric – this is only needed to stop things blowing away if it's windy

Method

1 Choose the sunniest place in the garden and work on a table or flat surface.

2 Spray the fabric with water.

3 Squirt some fabric dye on the wet fabric – you can use a brush to cover a wider area but the damp cloth will encourage the dye to spread anyway.

4 Place the flowers etc onto the dye area. You can really use anything for this as long as it has a well-defined shape, but flowers and leaves are a lovely way to record what's in your garden. You can place the items in a particular pattern or just at random – it's a bit of an adventure!

5 Put the clear plastic or glass on top of the whole thing to keep everything in place.

6 Make a cool drink, enjoy the sun and wait for 20 minutes or until the fabric is dry.

7 Fabric dyes when fixed should withstand washing – give it a good iron as well to make sure it's fixed. You should be left with a beautiful delicate and unique print.

Draw outside with watercolour pencils

Getting creative outside doesn't have to be complicated and can be very relaxing. One way to make the process easy to manage is by using watercolour pencils; you draw with them in the normal way but water can be added to the drawing to turn the colour into paint. This can create a lovely spread or delicate 'wash' of colour, perfect for a background. Sets of watercolour pencils can be bought from art shops, some stationers and toy shops.

Ingredients

- Watercolour pencils – if you want to represent the landscape in your drawing try to get hold of softer colours as well as brights
- Thick paper – a heavy weight cartridge paper or watercolour paper is best if you're planning to make the paper very wet
- Water pot or plastic diffuser bottle (the kind you spray plants with)
- Couple of paint brushes of different sizes
- Something rigid to rest on that won't mind getting wet
- Masking tape or clips to keep the paper in place
- Sponge

Method

1 If you want to experiment a lot with using the pencils with water, it will be worth stretching the paper first. Do this by laying it on a board or sturdy tray and spraying it with clean water. Use the sponge to sweep any air bubbles away from the centre to the edges of the paper so it's really flat, then tape it into place. Wetting the paper allows the fibres to relax and dry slightly stretched, which will help to prevent wrinkles later on. If you're planning to use the pencils mainly dry, just tape or clip the dry paper into place.

2 To create a 'wash' or thin paint effect as a background for your drawing, lightly colour a wide area with a pencil, then use a wet brush or diffuser spray directly onto the paper to turn the colour into paint. As well as creating a delicate background this is a good way to get started without worrying too much about detail early on. A wash is a great way to make a sky, sea or distant bit of landscape, or just an abstract background.

3 If you want to create a soft and fluid looking drawing, try wetting smaller areas of the paper and drawing across the whole thing – the wet areas will allow the colour to bleed slightly. You can also make interesting blends of colour this way, great for flowers.

4 If you want to draw detail – maybe something close-up in the foreground – wait until the wash is dry to make sure your new line is sharp.

5 If a sharp-edged feel is what you're after, once the drawing is complete and dry, use a fine black pen to draw around outlines of particular shapes. This will make certain shapes really stand out, so best kept for the bits you really want to draw focus to.

Make a time capsule

This activity offers a chance to reminisce but also to create new memories that family and friends can be part of. It would work well with a group of people as well as one to one, and would be a good way to enable younger and older members of the family to share time together. There are two parts to the activity that can be done at different times. It's slow paced, so allow plenty of time.

Ingredients

- Old photos – find ones that span the lifetime of the person you're caring for, particularly those taken when they were in their childhood and early adulthood
- Objects or clothing of the same period – things that relate to the person's occupation are a good start
- *Optional* – Reminiscence box from Aberdeenshire Council's Library and Museum Service – these can be loaned out to groups and individuals and often themed around things like food, toys or occupations
- *Optional* – visit to a museum with a specific collection that interests you, e.g. transport, farming, fashion
- Camera
- A few small contemporary objects – you can decide what these are later
- Waterproof tub big enough to hold the contemporary objects

Method

1 Treat this activity like opening up a precious treasure trove and look at just a few things to start with. You could ask a few encouraging questions about the photos:

– "What do you think she's wearing?"

– "What kind of building do you think that is?"

– "Where do you think that is?"

2 When you find an object that particularly resonates allow plenty of time to chat about it and explore how it feels to touch. You might have contemporary versions of the same thing around the home to make comparisons with, e.g. a packet of flour, a pair of smart shoes, a telephone.

3 Now think about making your own time capsule to be opened in six months' time. It will be lovely to open a box filled with summery things when you're in the depths of winter so try and make it very much 'of the moment'. You could include some photos of today, newspaper clippings, pictures from magazines, a written record of the day's events or a message to each other, an object to do with a hobby, something nice to smell, a few coins, a new pair of socks!

4 Put your chosen objects in the waterproof tub and hide it in the house, garage or shed, or bury it in the garden. (You'll need to make sure the tub is very waterproof for burying underground).

5 Note the location and reminder to re-open in six months' time.

Make a recycled notebook

There are lots of ways to make books and pads – this has to be one of the simplest and cheapest. Before you start have a think about what the end use might be as this will affect what type of paper you use; it could be a scrap book, note book, photo album, recipe pad… Thinner paper is fine for making notes on but photo albums or scrap books need more sturdy paper or thin card. Patterned backgrounds work well too, and the paper doesn't have to be the same the whole way through the book. Have a look what at what's already in the house that can be re-used – old rolls of lining paper and wall papers are prime candidates.

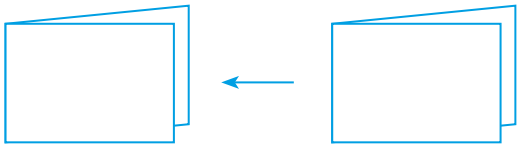
Ingredients

- 2-6 sheets of paper cut the same size – these should be at least A4 size, as each page will end up being a quarter of the original size of the paper
- A stick-like object for the spine of the book, e.g. a pencil, wooden skewer, short bamboo cane etc
- 1 elastic band

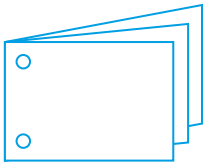
Method

1 Fold each sheet of paper in half long ways, so it's long and thin. If it has writing on it already make sure this is on the inside.

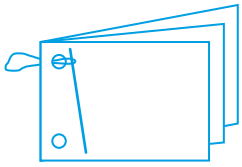
2 Fold each paper in half the other way and tuck them all together to make a book shape.



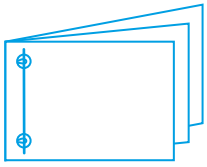
3 Make two holes through all the layers about 7mm (¼") in from the folded edge.



4 Put the elastic band round one end of the stick and thread the band through one of the holes in the paper.



5 Flip the book over and pull the elastic band down and through the other hole, then thread it back onto the stick.

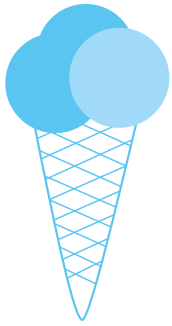


Paint some pebbles

People find it hard to resist picking up a few pebbles if they're on the beach, so why not make a small collection and bring nature into the home? A trip to the seaside is guaranteed to stimulate conversation, physical activity and a wee treat is good for everyone's morale. Take a rain jacket and aim to eat at least one ice cream!

Ingredients

- Pebbles
- Plastic bag to put pebbles in at the beach
- Coloured nail polish or permanent marker pens or acrylic paints or felt tips
- Clear nail polish or un-tinted household varnish
- Paint brush
- Bowl or dish for display
- Camera
- Local or world map



Method

1 Visit a pebbly beach and take your time collecting a few stones. Paler ones with flat sides are better for decorating later on. Take a photo of the day.

2 Back home, give the stones a wash and scrub with a nail brush.

3 Once dry, turn the stones into mini works of art by decorating them with patterns, flowers, faces etc. This can be fun to do with younger members of the family alongside older ones and you can include craft materials like sequins, wool and wobbly eyes. Make sure you protect the working area from paint and pens first. A solvent-based glue or contact adhesive can be used to stick stones together to make mini sculptures as well.

4 Wait until the decoration is dry, then varnish the pebbles with clear nail polish or an un-tinted household varnish (for wood or boats), available from DIY shops. If you buy a household varnish it'll be easier to clean your brush if the varnish is water-based, otherwise you'll need a solvent-based brush cleaner as well. If you've decorated the pebbles with felt tips, use a solvent-based varnish or nail polish (if you use a water-based varnish the felt tips will run).

5 Once the varnish is dry display the pebbles in a bright place or use bigger ones as paper weights.

6 Attach your photo of the beach trip to the map. Find more seaside images and attach them as well; these could be family photos, postcards from travelling friends or magazine images. Lots of fun to be had in comparing the different images, and maybe use them as a tool to plan another trip?

Recreate a masterpiece!

This activity is guaranteed to make you laugh and can produce some hilarious results. If you take your time and work on the detail, it can produce some beautiful results as well. The aim is to recreate a famous artwork using very basic materials from around the house, so the Mona Lisa might be re-made using torn magazines and newspapers, or Van Gogh's Sunflowers might reappear made from wool, string and a duster.

Ingredients

- A large clear image to work from – the library and the internet are the obvious sources for images – you might find that the famous image you had in your head is actually quite different when you really study it
- Scissors
- Washable PVA or craft glue
- *Optional* – solvent-based glue for plastics
- Pencil
- Card or cardboard as the base
- Assorted materials – magazines, newspapers, buttons, thread, old clothes, craft materials, paper bags etc

Method

1 Cover the table or work surface to protect it from glue.

2 Spread out all the materials in easy reach. For some people living with dementia making decisions can be difficult, in which case keep the range of materials small and try to include distinctive colours.

3 You could draw the image out first on the card to give some guidance but it's fun just to go ahead and start re-making the picture.

4 Try and copy the background first – tear or cut up small bits of roughly the right colour, it doesn't have to be an exact match. Stick into place.

5 Do the same for the main part of the picture. Pick out the detail of hair or particular patterns with wool or distinct shapes – using eyes or mouths from glossy magazines can produce very funny results.

6 If you've enjoyed the process, try making a self-portrait using the same method – if you're brave enough!

Sculpt simple clay pots

Air-dry clay and salt dough can be made into small ornaments, decorative pots or dishes. Both are easy to manipulate (salt dough particularly so), and can imprinted with natural objects or cooking utensils to make interesting patterns. The finished items can also be practical – pots to store pens or dishes to hold rings for example. You can plan to make a specific thing, or just see what happens as you go along. The actions of rolling and kneading dough are ones that many people have done before, and can be good gentle physical exercise.

Ingredients

- Table or hard surface that can be wiped down
- Rolling pin
- Things to make patterns – cutlery, bottle openers, sieves, shells, cones, jewellery…
- Small damp sponge
- Blunt knife or spatula
- Plastic bag
- Air-dry clay – from arts/craft shops or toy shops

  or
- Salt dough – ½ cup salt, ½ cup water, and 1 cup flour, kneaded together

Method

1 Set out your ingredients and tools within easy reach on the table.

2 Take a tennis ball sized piece of dough and kneed to soften if required. Air-dry clay can be hard to start with so begin with smaller bits. Just enjoy the feeling of it in your hands – clay's also good for softening the skin!

3 To make a flat shape, use the rolling pin and then cut it to the shape you want – you could use a bowl or tile as a template to cut round. To make a pot, either roll the clay into a ball and then push your thumbs into the middle and then gently outwards to make a well shape, or roll the clay into long sausages and coil them upwards in a spiral to make a pot shape. Then run a knife or spatula down the outside to smooth and join the coils together. If the clay is dry, use a damp sponge to moisten and help it stick to itself.

4 Decorate by pressing into the clay/dough with anything that makes an interesting pattern. If you don't like it, just smooth it over by rubbing with the wet sponge.

5 To harden air-dry clay follow the instructions on the packet. To harden salt dough, either put in the microwave for 3-4 minutes or in a pre-heated but cool oven for 3-4 hours.

6 Store any unused clay or dough in a sealed plastic bag, or if you need to stop half way through, use the bag to cover the object so it stays soft.

7 Once dry your objects can be decorated with felt tips, poster paint, emulsion, acrylic paints – even nail polish!

Sew a lavender bag

If you've sown lavender as an activity earlier in the year, this is a good opportunity to make further use of this lovely plant. Lavender is known for its soothing properties that can aid sleep, so you could make a lavender bag to put under a pillow or be made into a fragrant bath soak.

Ingredients

- Two rectangles of fabric approx. 15 x 12 cm (6" x 5") – could be recycled from a piece of clothing or bed linen
- Needle and thread/sewing machine
- Pins
- 20cm (8") ribbon
- Cardboard box – shoe box size or bigger
- Newspaper
- Spoon
- Funnel
- Fresh lavender
- *Optional* – spoonful of Epsom salts and spoonful of rock salt

Method

1 For this activity you only need the buds not the stalks of the lavender, and the best time to cut the plant is just before the buds open completely as this will help retain their fragrance. Pick them mid-morning, once the dew has evaporated.

2 Put the lavender heads in a box lined with newspaper and store in a warm dry place for a couple of weeks, shaking gently each day to aerate the plant until the heads are dry and crunchy.

3 To make the bag, place the two rectangles of fabric right sides together and sew around three sides, about 1.5cm (½") from the edge.

4 Iron the bag, turn it the right side round, use a pencil to poke the corners out and iron again.

5 Half fill the bag with dried lavender using the spoon and funnel.

6 Make the ribbon into a loop and stick the ends into the bag (the ribbon is just there so you can hang the bag up). Fold the open edge of the bag inwards and pin in place.

7 Sew along the open edge of the bag, securing the ribbon in place. Enjoy!

8 If you want to make a lavender bath soak, use the same method but make sure the fabric is loosely woven (muslin or voile is good), and add a spoonful each of Epsom salts and rock salt.

Meander with a magnifying glass

Taking time to study things in close up can be calming and surprising in equal measure. As we age, our eye sight changes and generally the ability to see detail diminishes. Our perception of colour changes too but using a magnifying glass can put a new and interesting spin on things.

When the weather's good, try putting some time aside for a gentle meander through some woods or public gardens. Take a magnifying glass and chat about the amazing flora and fauna you find. If it's wet, you could do the same thing in some botanical gardens, or even a garden centre!

Ingredients

- Magnifier – Lightweight hand held versions are available from £5 up
  - Lightweight sheet magnifiers (A4 size, also great for reading newspapers) cost about £6
  - Lightweight folding magnifiers with carry case from about £15

Places to visit

1 **Woods**
Many public woods have paths suitable for all levels of mobility and stamina. Visit www.woods.org to see what's available in your area.

2 **Gardens**
www.scotlandsgardens.org lists private and public gardens open on a permanent and temporary basis.

3 The National Trust for Scotland www.nts.org.uk and Historic Scotland www.historic-scotland.gov.uk both have details of gardens.

4 Botanical gardens tend to have their own websites although some will be included in local authority listings of parks and gardens. You could also consider taking your magnifying glass along to an organised tour of the garden.

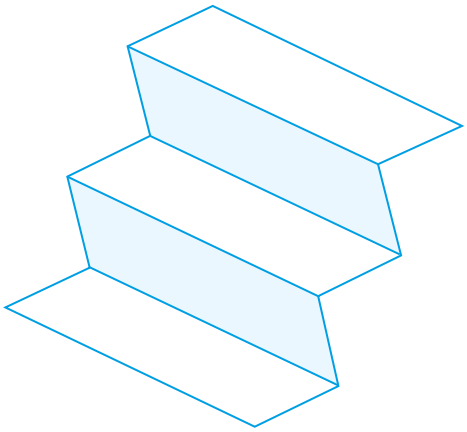
Play 'Consequences'

A simple fun game that can be played anywhere as long you have paper and pen, Consequences helps to improve cognition with a light touch and sprinkling of humour. The aim of the game is to write a short story in partnership with another person, but where each person writes a separate bit not knowing what has come before.

You can play Consequences with more than two people and have several pieces of paper circulating around the group at the same time. Just make sure the paper gets passed in the same direction (e.g. always pass it to the person to your right), and that all the steps are completed. A group game leads to lots of funny stories to enjoy.

Ingredients

- Paper
- Pen



Method

1 Player One chooses a female name e.g. Marilyn, and writes “Marilyn met...” at the top of the page. The name should be of a real person or a character. Player One then folds over the paper so the words can’t be seen and hands it to Player Two.

2 Player Two chooses a male name e.g. Micky, and writes “Micky at...” then folds over the paper and passes it back to Player One.

3 Player One chooses a place, writes it down, folds over the paper and hands it to Player Two.

4 Player Two writes “She said...” and fills in the blank. e.g. “She said… Why the long face?”. Passes it back to Player One.

5 Player One writes “He said...”, then fills in the blank and passes it back.

6 Player Two writes “She gave him...” then fills in the blank and passes it back.

7 Player One decides what happens next, writes it down and passes it back.

8 Player Two unfolds the paper and reads the story out loud.

Clap the 'Feel the Beat' songs

Follow the speed of the music by tapping, clapping or stomping the steady beat.

Ingredients

Choose from the following:

- TV Theme
- Country Music
- Easy Listening
- Jazz Piano
- Spanish Dance
- Waltz of the Flowers – Tchaikovsky
- Eine Kleine Nachtmusik – Mozart
- Violin Concerto – Beethoven

- The music for this activity can be found on the CD that accompanies the hard copy workbook, or online at: https://soundcloud.com/search/sets?q=create%20connect
- One drum or other small percussion instrument per participant (or any object that will produce a distinct sound, e.g. pot, tin mug, plastic tub, etc)
- A drumstick (or wooden spoon, piece of dowel, pen)

Method

1 Everyone should have a drum or other musical instrument on which to play.

2 Play one of the Musical Recipe Tracks. Listen carefully to the speed of the music and start tapping out the steady beat (or pulse) of the music on your instrument.

3 Try and play along to the beat of all the downloadable tracks.

4 Then, as you watch your favourite television programme or a film or listen to a CD, try and 'feel the beat' of those pieces of music too.

Sing the 'Dressed for Dinner' song

Who is going to dinner and what are they wearing?

Using the well-known song 'Mary had a Little Lamb', describe what the other dinner guests are wearing.

Ingredients

- The music for this activity can be found on the CD that accompanies the hard copy workbook, or online at https://soundcloud.com/search/sets?q=create%20connect
- Observation skills
- Your voice

Method

1 Play the track 'Dressed for Dinner'. The introduction welcomes you to the party.

Hello, welcome to my home,
to my home, to my home.

Hello, welcome to my home,
please do come inside.

2 Now one of you chooses the name of another 'guest' and an item of their clothing, e.g. David and his red shirt. So the song would be sung like this:

David's got his red shirt on,
red shirt on, red shirt on.

David's got his red shirt on,
all dressed for dinner now.

Then everyone in the group sings this version of the song together.

3 After the group have sung the verse, there's enough time in the music for someone in the group to indicate (perhaps by waving their hand) that they'd like to sing the next verse. So, after the 'solo' verse, everyone sings this new verse. The track is long enough for 4 people to sing a verse on their own and for the group to repeat each verse.

4 Describe your guests in as many ways as possible using colours and shades, patterns (stripy, checked), fancy dress, tartan trousers. Have fun and be complimentary.

5 When the group are singing the verse together, perhaps the person who they are singing about could show off their clothes or do a little dance!

Create a floral display

Summer brings lots of opportunity to bring beautiful blooms inside to brighten the home. Your display doesn't have to be large or spectacular – a simple arrangement will draw just as much attention to the flowers and you can add a special twist by using an unusual container as a vase.

Have a look around the house or visit a charity shop to see if there's anything that might spark a memory and lead to conversation; a pretty teapot from the 40's, a stylish coffee pot from the 60's, an enamel jug, a sweetie jar or jam jar.

Ingredients

- Flowers and greenery
- Scissors, secateurs or pruning shears
- Vase or alternative container

Method

1 Start by choosing your flowers, aiming for a good range of scale and texture. Select a fair amount of greenery as the base or backdrop, a few large headed flowers and some smaller ones of a different type to 'fill in'. In terms of colour, you could select flowers to complement your décor or the colour of the vase. Floral arrangements with one or two colours generally seem more elegant, whereas multi-coloured displays are delightfully cheerful.

2 If you have flower food, pour it into the water, then strip any leaves that will be below the waterline as this keeps the water clean.

3 Working with the greenery first, cut each stem so the leaves are just touching the top of the vase and place them in one at a time – cutting the stems at an angle will help them absorb more water. If you want to create a fuller feel to the display, cut some of the stems slightly shorter and put them in the vase at an angle so they create a curve around the rim.

4 Once the greenery is in place, take the large blooms and place them in the vase one at a time. The greenery should act as a web to hold them in place.

5 Lastly, add the smaller headed flowers to the display, scattering them throughout.

6 If you're using an unusual container as a vase and it has sparked a memory, you could note this down on a paper label or luggage tag, and attach it to the container with ribbon or garden string.

Write an acrostic poem

Great for problem solving and word play but also very simple to do, acrostic poems are where the first letters in a line spell out a particular word vertically down the poem.

The lines don't need to rhyme, they just need to relate to the vertical word.

For example:

Ingredients

- Scrap paper
- Something to write with
- Thick paper or card
- 20cm (8") ribbon

Sun shines and warms my upturned face

Umbrellas and raincoats can stay at home!

Myriad of beautiful flowers as far as I can see

Memories of clear blue skies and fields

Everything in the garden comes alive

Reaching and stretching in the warmth

Method

1 Decide on the vertical word you want to work on – it could be linked to the season or could be a friend's name, or a favourite place…

2 You can launch straight in or if you need help to get some ideas going, try quickly writing down as many things as you can think of that relate to the vertical word.

3 Take time to write a few versions. Once you've got it cracked, copy the finished poem onto the thick paper or card, attach the ribbon and hang it to display. You could use the poem to make a birthday or thank you card for someone.

4 A harder version of this would be to make the last letters in each line spell out a word.

5 If you're really keen, try using the letters in the middle of each line!

Looking out the window I can see a blaze of colour **S**

Blackbirds, swallows, sparrows but not a single em **U**

Bees buzzing busily on the flowers in bloo **M**

Makes my head feel drowsy with their lovely hu **M**

The earth is warm to touch and the garden is aliv **E**

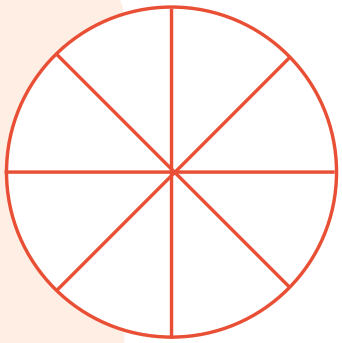
No rain, no snow, no sleet, just summe **R**

Create a mandala

Traditionally, a mandala is a spiritual or ritual symbol that represents the universe, often based on a circle made up of separate but balanced sections, and with a central image. In more modern versions, a mandala can be a creative way to express what's important to you in your life. The final thing can be hung on a wall or in a window as a personal touchstone. Have a look on the internet for amazing inspirational mandalas.

Ingredients

- Large square piece of card or thick paper, about 30cm (12") wide
- Pencil
- Ruler
- Things to decorate the sections – coloured pencils, images from magazines, artificial flowers, craft materials, photos, dried foodstuffs etc – you can use anything you like; some of the most beautiful mandalas are patterns made simply of coloured rice



Method

1 Make a list of the major aspects of life that are important to you or that you are proud of – these could include family, friends, activities, beliefs, achievements, skills, character traits etc.

2 Draw a circle on the card, as big as possible. If you can't find anything to draw round, use the old trick of pinning some string to the middle of the paper and attach a pencil to the other end, then draw a circle by moving the pencil around the paper while keeping the string taut.

3 Divide your circle into slices of pie, so the number of slices equals the number of major life aspects you listed before.

If one of these outweighs all these others, make this a separate circle in the centre of the mandala.

4 Now the creative bit – decorate each section in a way that reflects one of your major life aspects. You could treat this like a scrap book and stick images down, or be more abstract or meditative and just create patterns. You might find that some life aspects feel more structured or rigid than others, which could be represented by strong geometric shapes, whereas an emotion like "the joy of seeing my grandchildren" might be expressed through fluid patterns or bold colours. This mandala is yours and there's no right or wrong way to make it.

5 When you're happy with it, your mandala can act as a positive reminder of what's good in your life.

Design a table arrangement

If you use floral foam for your arrangement it should last a month as long as you keep it moist. An alternative would be to use artificial foliage in which case it might just need dusting from time to time! It's also a lovely thing to make later in the year for a festive meal.

Ingredients

- Pillar candle, between 15cm - 20cm (6"- 8") high
- Base for the display e.g. ceramic dish, slate or low vessel that is heat proof and tolerates water
- Floral foam, ideally at least 8cm (3") deep – available from florists and craft shops
- Small kitchen knife
- Short lengths of foliage – tree ivy, holly or box are good
- 5 orange or red roses, or similar
- Dried orange slices – available from florists and craft shops, or dry your own 1cm thick slices on a baking tray for 2-3 hours at 120C, 250F
- Florist wire or similar
- Scissors, secateurs or pruning shears
- *Optional* – snips to cut wire
- *Optional* – cinnamon sticks or pine cones

Method

1 Place the candle on the base. The floral foam needs to wrap around the candle up to a height of about 8cm (3”) from the base, so you may need to cut it into pieces and hold it in place with wire or string. Foam is very easy to cut so use the kitchen knife to sculpt it into a fairly smooth doughnut shape around the candle.

2 Strip the lower leaves from the greenery and push the stems into the foam at regular intervals around the candle without any gaps.

3 Strip the leaves from the roses and cut the stems short, to about 8cm (3”). Space them regularly around the candle and push into the foam.

4 Next, take the dried orange slices and make a stem for each one; thread the slice half way along the wire or pipe cleaner, then fold the wire in half and twist the lengths together.

5 Push the orange wires into the foam all around the display. You can also add cinnamon sticks or pine cones securely this way.

6 Sprinkling water over the foam regularly will keep the foliage in good shape. If you light the candle, remember not to leave it burning when unattended.

Draw 'sgraffito' style

Sgraffito is a technique used with oil pastels that involves scratching through one layer of colour to reveal another. It's simple to do and very satisfying, and leads to some surprising results. Oil pastels are a cross between chalk pastels and wax crayons and come in packs of vibrant colours, perfect for representing fireworks. You can buy them in packs or individually from art/craft shops and some toy shops.

Ingredients

- Oil pastels in a range of bright colours, plus one black or dark colour
- Base – card, thick paper or cardboard – greeting card size or A4 is fine
- Point – toothpick, wooden skewer or darning needle
- *Optional* – pictures of fireworks to crib from

Method

1 Cover the table or tray with newspaper to protect the surface.

2 Use the bright oil pastels to cover the card completely with thick bands of colour – these can be any shape but vertical stripes work well.

3 Leave the colour for 5 minutes, then go over the whole surface with a black or dark oil pastel, so that the bright colours are completely covered.

4 Do a test run with the point – on a corner of the card scratch through the dark pastel to reveal the colour beneath. The test run is to ensure the point isn't too sharp as sometimes it will scratch through the card as well as the colour.

5 Now draw your fireworks in the same way and allow the bright colours to come through. You can use different size points to make different thickness of line, and make the lines as intricate as you like. Try using forks, pencils, or the edge of coins for different effects.

6 This sgraffito and oil pastel technique can also be used to make lovely filigree or lace-like patterns and designs, perfect for handmade Christmas cards or decorations.

Gather an autumn canvas

When the leaves start to change colour it's a great opportunity to bring some nature into the home to celebrate the change of season. This activity encourages you to create a temporary collage artwork using natural materials – it won't last long but will be a lovely talking piece for a while.

Ingredients

- Ready-made artist's canvas – good quality ones are available from art shops but you can also pick up cheaper versions in some stationary shops that are fine for this activity
- Needle – one with a large eye preferably but also a sharp point
- Strong or topstitching thread, preferably in an autumnal colour
- Masking tape, glue dots or similar
- Collection of colourful leaves and the odd twig
- *Optional* – spray varnish
- *Optional* – water spray bottle

Method

1 Make a small autumnal collection of leaves, moss, pine cones, etc, anything you like the look of but try to choose things that are not completely round and smooth like conkers, as they will be difficult to work with. Try to get some really strong colours and distinctive shapes.

2 Give everything a good shake to remove any beasties, and pat dry with some kitchen towel if really wet.

3 Before attaching anything to the canvas, try making a few different patterns with your collection just on the table. Experiment with layering everything up or leaving gaps between things. The first way might emphasise the different colours, the second might show up the shapes. You might want to have elements of the design extending over the edges of the canvas or keep it well ordered. Some canvases have very deep edges so you could decorate around the sides as well.

4 Once you have an idea for the design start attaching the individual leaves etc. The idea is to sew through the canvas but you might find it helpful to attach things first with glue dots or masking tape to keep them in place. Make the stitching part of the design – it doesn't have to be terribly neat and it could follow the shapes of the leaves or make a completely new pattern.

5 Once your canvas is complete you can use a spray varnish to help maintain the colour, although it will dry up after a while. You can also try a light spray with water to keep the leaves fresh.

Make baked buttons

This activity uses a polymer clay that you bake in the oven to harden. It comes in a huge range of colours and feels a bit like children's modelling clay or a hard dough. The action of rolling and working with the clay can be quite therapeutic, and it's possible to create some really beautiful buttons that can be used to bring new life to old coats and bags in preparation for winter.

Ingredients

- Assorted colours of oven baked polymer clay – several brands are available from craft shops – it comes in small packets which can be pricey so choose your colours wisely; you don't need a lot of clay to make a button
- Rolling pin
- Blunt knife or clay cutting tool
- Oven
- Things to make shapes with – sewing thread spools, egg cups, mini cookie cutters
- Sheet of parchment or grease proof paper
- Sandpaper or emery board
- Things to make patterns with – forks, ornaments, jewellery, lids etc

Method

1 Clay picks up anything it comes into contact with so tape the parchment or grease proof paper to the table to make a clean non-stick surface.

2 Break off a small piece of clay and soften it between your fingers.

3 If you want to make multi-coloured buttons you need to combine the colours at this point. This can be done in a number of ways – try making long sausages of coloured clay then twist them together, or wrapping one colour of clay around a sausage of a different colour.

4 Use the rolling pin to flatten the clay to the thickness of a button. (The multi-coloured versions will become swirled or marbled).

5 As you would with biscuits, cut out a number of shapes depending on what size buttons you want.

6 Now is the point to experiment with texture if you want patterned buttons. Use whatever interesting things you can find to press into the clay. If you want to make identical patterned buttons, bake one first, then press clay into it and bake that piece of clay. The new piece will have the pattern in reverse and can be used as a mould to make lots more buttons.

7 Use a tooth pick to make 2 or 4 holes in the button to sew through.

8 Cook in the oven according the clay manufacturer's instructions.

9 Once cooked, use the sandpaper or emery board to knock off any rough edges and varnish if required.

Make tissue paper flowers

It might be cold and grey outside but any amount of colour can be created with a beautiful bunch of tissue paper flowers. They can be a little fiddly but it's a simple technique that can repeated to make different sizes and levels of complexity depending on the effect you want to create. To avoid ending up with something garish consider your colours before you start and choose ones to complement the décor in a room, seasonal colours for nature lovers, team colours for a loyal supporter…

Ingredients

To make 6 flowers:

- 24 sheets of tissue paper
- Scissors
- 12 long green pipe cleaners

or

- Steel wire cut into 12 lengths about 45cm (18") long, and green flower tape (both available from florists and craft shops)

Method

1 Twist 2 pipe cleaners or 2 lengths of wire together to make one strong stem. If using wire, you then need to wrap the stem in flower tape, pulling slightly at the tape to make the glue stick. It's a bit fiddly but makes a more sophisticated end product.

2 Stack 4 tissue paper sheets on top of each other, then fold the stack in half to make a rectangle.

3 Starting at one of the short sides of the rectangle, make concertina folds about 2cm (¾") wide across the whole rectangle, as if you were making a paper fan. You should end up with a skinny but deep rectangle of folded paper.

4 Wrap the top of the pipe cleaner or wire stem around the middle of the folded paper so it is secure. This is the head of the flower.

5 Shape the ends of the folded paper. The way you cut the ends will affect the look of the final flower – for a spikey look cut across at an angle, for a fluffy look round off the corners.

6 Gently separate the tissue paper layers, fluffing them up into a flower shape. This will take some time but is worth the effort. Repeat for the remaining 5 flowers. Display.

7 For a more complex flower use more sheets of tissue paper, layers of tissue that span from dark to light, or shape the ends of the folded paper using scissors with a decorative cutting edge.

Print an autumnal design

Fallen leaves, cones and conkers provide lots of wonderful shapes to inspire creative work.

In this activity you can turn simple or complex drawings into prints on fabric or paper.

Ingredients

- Polystyrene sheet – available from art shops, or use any polystyrene food packaging (e.g. pizza bases), as long as it's flat and clean – polystyrene insulation or ceiling tiles will also work providing they aren't stippled or bumpy
- Ink/lino roller – from art shops or you could sacrifice a rolling pin instead
- Printing ink – available in tubes from art shops, a tube costs about £4
- Plain fabric, art canvas or paper to print on
- Sheet of plastic or tray wide enough for the roller
- Pencil
- Leaves, cones, moss etc
- Tape

Method

1 The first step is to draw a design inspired by the leaves etc. onto the polystyrene, so spread everything out so you can see all the shapes clearly.

2 Think about the design you want to make. Try layering the leaves etc on top of each other, or keeping everything in one layer and fitting the shapes into each other. You could also just use one shape and repeat it several times. Note, the final print will be a mirror image of your design so you'll need to think in reverse.

3 Once you have a clear idea, take a pencil and draw your design onto the polystyrene. You need to push hard enough with the pencil to leave a small groove. Try tracing around an object if you're not confident to draw it freehand.

4 Tape your paper or fabric onto a flat washable surface so there are no creases.

5 Squeeze out some ink onto the plastic sheet or tray and roll the roller several times until the roller is evenly covered.

6 Roll the ink over the polystyrene design so all the flat surface is covered, leaving the grooves with no ink in them.

7 Turn the polystyrene over and press firmly onto the paper or fabric, ink side down. Don't wriggle it about as this will blur the image. Lift off carefully.

8 You can use the polystyrene design several times and you'll find each print will be slightly different depending on how much ink and pressure you use.

9 Some inks will be waterproof so check before buying if that's what you need.

Play 'Hangman'

A really simple game that dates back to Victorian times, Hangman promotes cognitive stimulation as well as laughter. It can also be played as a group, providing a useful tool to bring people together.

The basic aim is for one person to think of a word and for the others to guess what it is by suggesting letters that appear in that word.

For each wrong suggestion, the first person draws part of a set of gallows, moving onto drawing a hanged man. Once the hanged man is complete, the player guessing the word has lost.

Ingredients

- Paper
- Pencil

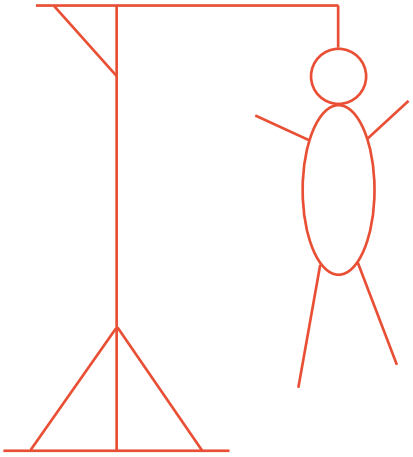
H _ NG _ _ N

Method

1 One person thinks of a word and writes down the corresponding number of dashes (one dash per letter).

2 The other player suggests a letter that might be in the word. If they guess correctly, the letter is written down in the right place on the dashes. If they guess wrongly, the first person draws one part of the gallows. Most people play the game so separate parts of the gallows are drawn first, then the man's head, body, arms and legs. Any incorrect letters are written to one side.

3 Play continues until the word is guessed or the man is hung.



HANGMAN

AUTUMN

Visit a 'relaxed' theatre performance

Although initially developed for young people and children with autism, 'relaxed' performances are for any audience members with sensory or learning impairments or anyone who may benefit from a more relaxed atmosphere.

Unlike traditional theatre, it's considered perfectly OK to move about and speak during the show so you can feel less anxious about upsetting others or feeling embarrassed. Sudden noises are sometimes removed from productions and lights remain at a low level so you're not plunged into darkness. There's often a few more staff on hand if you need help, and information on what to expect and the basic plot line can often be available from the theatre beforehand.

Access Scottish Theatre www.accessscottishtheatre.com provides information about accessible theatre productions across Scotland. Although mainly set up to serve deaf, hard of hearing and visually impaired audiences, it's also a useful source of information on physical access requirements and lists relaxed performances. You can search by area or by support required e.g. audio described, captioned performance or BSL (British Sign Language).

(continued overleaf)

Audio described:

These are performances which support people who are blind or partially sighted. An audio describer meets audience members beforehand to introduce set and characters by providing verbal description, which continues during the performance via a headset.

Captioning:

This is similar to television subtitling and is helpful to people who are hard of hearing. Short pieces of text appear on screens as the performance goes along, usually placed to the side of the stage. Hearing assistance systems are often used alongside captioning.

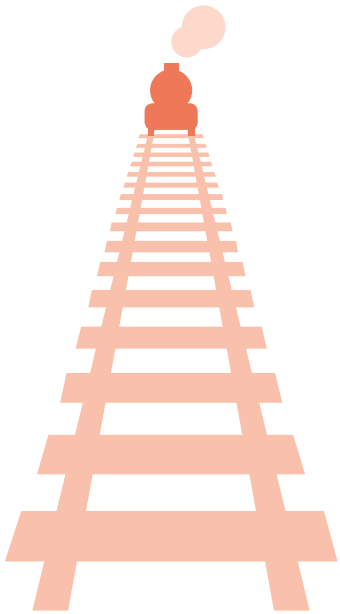
BSL interpreted:

These performances allow people for whom British Sign Language is their first or preferred language to follow the action in detail. BSL interpreters provide a linguistic and artistic interpretation. The interpreter mostly stands to one side of the stage but sometimes interpreters are involved in the staging or the performance.

Relaxed performances are still quite a new phenomenon, so if you can't find a relaxed performance nearby, ring the theatre and suggest it!

Chant the 'Faster Slower Engine' song

A poem to be spoken aloud using musical acceleration and braking.



Ingredients

- The poem:

  Engine, engine number nine,

  Going down the Glasgow line,

  If the train goes off the track.

  Will I get my money back?

- Your imagination
- Your voice

Method

1 Imagine train tracks on the floor extending beyond the walls on either side of the room. The middle of the room, where you are, is the station.

2 The train is approaching the station at full speed, so start by saying the first line of the poem very quickly. However, the train needs to slow down in order to stop at the station, so say the rest of the poem slower and slower until the train reaches the station at the same time as you end the poem. In music the Italian word, '*rallentando*', is used to describe this gradual slowing down.

3 Now, the train has picked up some passengers and continues on its journey. So, this time, start saying the poem slowly and as the train accelerates, say the poem quicker and quicker. In music the Italian word, '*accelerando*', is used to describe this gradual increase in speed.

4 **Variations:**

a) Change the place the train is going to by choosing a different town or city.

b) Say the rhyme with different types of train in mind, e.g. a fast express train or a slow freight train, so that the overall acceleration and braking is appropriate to that locomotive.

Sing the 'Halloween' song

'Hey Ho for Halloween'

'Double, double, toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble'.

Ingredients

- The music for this activity can be found on the CD that accompanies the hard copy workbook, or online at https://soundcloud.com/search/sets?q=create%20connect
- One drum per participant (or cauldron should one be handy)
- A beater (or spurtle, or whatever witches stir with)
- Witches hats, cats, pumpkins and other paraphernalia are optional

Method

1 Listen to the track and learn the song.

2 Using your ‘cauldron and spurtle’, stir to the steady beat as you sing the song this time.

3 Next, think of the rhythm of the words you are singing and tap out the rhythm on the edge of your ‘cauldron’ as you sing.

4 Now, imagine your spurtle is a broomstick and raise and lower it to the high and low notes in the song. There are five different notes altogether.

5 To add a bit of a Shakespearean atmosphere, some of you could chant the words:

‘Double, double, toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble’

in time with the others as they sing the tune.

6 Add all these ideas together to make a performance of this song. You’ll be showing the three main elements of music as you do so – steady beat, the rhythm and the pitch. Don’t forget to add a bit of drama to it as well!

Sing the 'Rain and Sun' song

'Rain and Sun'

'We'll weather the weather, whatever the weather'.

A song to sing whilst moving your hands to the different musical pitches. In the first part of the song it's raining and lots of puddles have formed. However, in the second part, the sun comes out and dries up all the puddles.

Ingredients

Musical Ingredient Track 'Rain and Sun' – download for free from https://soundcloud.com/search/sets?q=create%20connect

Method

1 Learn the song by listening to 'Rain and Sun' and looking at the way the words are set out overleaf. There are only 3 different notes in the song and they are only a musical step away from each other.

2 The actions to the first verse follow the movement of the rain, from high to low. Raise and lower your hands to show the different heights of the notes you are singing. Make sure that you 'shake' your hands for every syllable that you sing.

(continued overleaf)

3 The set of actions for the second verse are the same as the first verse, but there is a difference. Your hands will show the water rising up as the sun evaporates it. So start this verse with your hands down low and raise them up as your voice rises with the melody.

4 Is there a pattern to each verse? Does it appear in all four lines of each verse?

Verse 1

Pitch	Line 1	Line 2
High	Rain is	Rain is
Middle	fall-ing	fall-ing
Low	down. Splash!	down. Splash!

Pitch	Line 3	Line 4
High	Pit-ter, pit-ter,	Rain is
Middle	pat-ter, patter,	fall-ing
Low		down. Splash!

Verse 2

Pitch	Line 1	Line 2
High	bright. Yes!	bright. Yes!
Middle	shining	shining
Low	Sun is	Sun is

Pitch	Line 3	Line 4
High		bright. Yes!
Middle	up the puddles.	shining
Low	Drying many	Sun is

Repot a struggling plant

Such a simple activity but beneficial for both plant and human! Ideally repotting should take place in spring before the flush of new growth, but in autumn there can be less opportunities to get into the garden, so repotting struggling household plants is a nice way to keep in touch with nature. As well as a practical, useful thing to do, many people find the feel and smell of soil evokes pleasant memories too. Remember, you can hide boring or battered flower pots in more attractive containers as long as the soil can drain – any number of quirky containers can be used, from tea pots to buckets. Maybe you could paint them up as well?

Ingredients

- Poor struggling plant
- Potting compost
- Gravel, pebbles or wire mesh for drainage
- Larger container – traditionally gardeners only ‘pot up’ one size of pot to avoid slowing growth, so moving from a 10cm (4”) to a 15cm (6”) pot is fine but not from a 10cm to 20cm pot – make sure your new container isn’t a great deal larger than the present one

Method

1 Look for signs that your plant needs repotting – are there roots visible on top of the soil or at the base of the pot, does it have limp or yellow leaves?

2 Lightly water the plant and leave it for around an hour.

3 Prepare the new container by adding a small amount of gravel or pebbles, then potting compost.

4 Turn the pot upside down and gently pull it away from the plant ball, supporting the plant with your other hand.

5 Loosen the root ball carefully with your fingers or a fork.

6 Set the plant in the new container, making sure it doesn't sit lower than it did in the old pot as this could cause it to collapse.

7 Backfill with compost or soil and press it down gently and tap the pot to settle the earth.

8 Water well until you see some water start to drain at the bottom of the pot.

Write a concrete poem

Concrete or Shape poetry is where the way the words are written on the page reflects the theme of the poem, so a love poem might be written in the shape of a love heart, or a nature poem might be written as a tree. It makes a nice link between sight and speech, the lines don't need to rhyme and it could be written as a short story.

Ingredients

- Scrap paper
- Something to write with
- Thick paper or card
- 20cm (8") ribbon

You can keep the activity simple or use it as a reminiscence activity using a significant event as the theme.

For example:

The moon
tonight is a
curving slice, a
shining sliver of
light in Autumn's
evening sky. It
gazes down on
crumpled leaves
as they whirl in
an eddy of wind.
It turns the red
and yellows to
purples and
greys. Calm,
quiet.

Method

1 Decide on the theme and shape you want to work on – it could be linked to the season, a pet, a favourite place…

2 You can launch straight in or if you need help to get some ideas going, try quickly writing down as many things as you can think of that relate to the theme.

3 Take time to write a few versions. Once you've got it cracked, copy the finished poem onto the thick paper or card, attach the ribbon and hang to display. You could use the poem to make a birthday or thank you card for someone.

Construct a Christmas wreath

The simplest way to create a wreath is to use a polystyrene ring as a base. These are fairly cheap (under £5) and can be bought from craft shops, florists or on line. Traditionally they are hung on the front door, but smaller ones are very pretty above a fireplace or hung in the window. You can use as much or as little decoration as you like but it's probably best to opt for a particular style to avoid a jumble sale look, for example using lots of greenery, or traditional Christmas colours, or a bright contemporary look.

Ingredients

- Polystyrene ring – you can also make a ring from rolled chicken wire or foam
- Strong string or cord to hang
- Base fabric to cover the ring – several strips about 10cm x 40cm (4" x 16") long
- Decoration – for the natural look without having to keep things moist use fake greenery, bendy willow twigs, berries and pine cones – another approach would be to use Christmas decorations you already have, or make something really unique with scrap pieces of fabric and ribbon
- Long dressmakers' pins, thin wire or twine
- *Optional* – needle and thread

Method

1 If the wreath will be hung, make a loop of string or cord and tie it securely to polystyrene ring.

2 Wreaths work well when they are built up in layers, and you'll need to make sure the polystyrene is well covered so start by wrapping the ring with the base fabric. Pin it into place as you go.

3 Whatever materials you are using, try making them into small bunches or bundles before you attach them to the ring. When you do attach them, overlap them slightly – this helps with the layering effect and makes the final wreath look nice and full.

4 Use the pins to temporarily secure the layers until you're sure about the design. Heavier items and decoration that's at the bottom of the ring might need tying or sewing into place.

5 Once the wreath is complete hang it up and see if you need any extra flourishes (bows or berries for example). Take care not to hang it near any heaters.

6 An additional idea would be to pin photos of people you expect to see over the festive season onto the wreath. It's nice for visitors to know they been thought of and can be a handy reminder of who's coming.

Create a life story poster

A life is made up of many events, memories and experiences. Whilst it's important to capture the details, they don't have to be recorded in any particular order or date sequence.

This activity reflects the way many of us recall our lives – jumping about from memory to memory, making odd links along the way.

Ingredients

- Large sheet of paper – you could use the back of an old poster or piece of wall paper
- Personal photographs and memorabilia
- Assorted images – magazines, newspapers, gift wrap, old greetings cards
- Scissors
- Washable PVA or craft glue and spreader or brush
- Colourful wool or string

Method

1 Start with a favourite photo of yourself – it can be with other people and it doesn't have to be up to date. Have a think about why you like it, when and where it was taken and the feeling you get from it.

2 Look through the magazines etc and choose a background you feel suits your photo – it could be a colour or texture that complements it, or an image of a place. Stick the background right in the middle of your large sheet of paper. Then stick your photo on top of the background. This is your anchor point.

3 What are your memories associated with your photo? Is it a person, a place, a particular dress or piece of music? Have a look through your other personal photos and memorabilia and see if there's something that reflects this or has a connection to it. If you can't find something specific, try looking through the magazines to find something similar.

4 Once you have your second image, stick it anywhere on the large piece of paper. Attach a length of wool or string between the two images to make a visual connection.

5 Repeat the process with the new image, and keep going across the paper, making visual connections with the wool, linking photos, memorabilia and other images. Add words as well, dates and names, whatever you feel is important. You might want to draw a box around each image as you go, or let things overlap and spread out, just go with whatever you feel is right.

6 Depending on where you place things the final artwork might look like a web, a trail, a scribble or a grid. It'll probably reflect your natural creativity, falling somewhere between very ordered and very unstructured. However it looks, it will be a wonderful visual autobiography and talking point.

Create paper lantern fairy lights

Lovely for dark evenings and celebrations, this activity is a bit messy but results in lovely colourful hand-made lights for the house.

Ingredients

- String of white fairy lights
- Balloons – the same number of balloons as individual fairy lights
- Paper clips
- Coloured tissue paper – think about your choice of colours in terms of your décor or if the lights are for a special occasion, don't automatically choose primary colours
- PVA/craft glue
- Brush for glue
- Glue pot
- Vaseline or similar
- Pin
- *Optional* – bowl

Method

1 Tear the tissue paper into small pieces – smaller bits will be fiddlier but the final design will look more intricate.

2 Blow up one of the balloons enough so as to make a small ball shape and tie it off.

3 Cover the balloon in Vaseline – it may help to rest it in a bowl to prevent it rolling around. (The grease stops the tissue sticking to the balloon later on).

4 Mix up the glue with a little water, then paste bits of tissue paper onto the balloon so it's entirely covered. Make sure the tissue covers all of the balloon apart from the knot. It's best to do a few layers of tissue as this will make the final lantern stronger, and don't worry if the glue looks milky as it will dry clear.

5 Leave the balloon to dry, either by hanging it up or rest it on a hard surface that the glue won't stick to.

6 Repeat for all the balloons.

7 Wash your brush or it will harden rock solid!

8 Leave the balloon to dry overnight. Once the tissue paper is hard, pop the balloon, pull it out and you'll be left with a unique paper lantern. You might need to neaten the hole with scissors but don't make it too big.

9 Slide each tissue lantern over a fairy light and use the paper clips to keep them in place.

10 Turn on the fairy lights.

Design a retro scrapbook

Retro, vintage, traditional, old fashioned – all words that can be used to describe things we love from days gone by. This aim of this activity is to create a collection of images from a particular era or of a certain style, and is a chance to indulge in images of your favourite things. Many of us do this when we are children and scrap-booking has become very popular with adults over the last few years. Racing cars from the 1930's, Edwardian teapots, Punk record covers – it can be cheap and cheerful or you can splash out on ready-made embellishments to enhance your work.

Ingredients

- Scrapbook – available at many stationers and craft shops
- * A variety of paper and card to use as backgrounds – ideally these should complement whatever your collection will be, so think about the colours and patterns you choose
- Scissors – ones with a decorative cutting edge are also handy
- Glue dots (small adhesive dots that you peel off a backing sheet)
- Pens and pencils
- Assorted embellishments – buttons, threads, fabrics, ribbons
- *Optional* – ready-made embellish-ments such as stickers, rubber stamps, rub-on transfers and die-cuts can be bought from craft shops

Method

1 Decide on a theme for your collection, it can be as broad or as specific as you like. If you feel a bit stuck or you're creating a collection with someone else and you can't agree, have a browse through some local history or design books at the library to inspire you. Aberdeenshire's Libraries and Museums Services also have reminiscence boxes that they can loan out to groups. These are collections of original or reproduction objects that can be handled, often themed around a particular era or activity, such as WW2 or toys from the 1960s.

2 Start to gather images – photos, magazine clippings, photocopies, prints etc.

3 Choose the main image for your first page and select a background paper for it.

4 Mount the image on the background using the glue dots, then trim the edge of the background using the shaped scissors if you have some.

5 Repeat the process with a couple of other images that complement the original.

6 Decide on the best arrangement and stick everything to the scrapbook page.

7 Decorate the page with other embellishments and/or written notes to make the design come alive.

8 If you enjoy the process, try attending a scrapbooking club or class (often run by craft shops), to meet other enthusiasts.

* A note on *acid free* and *lignin free* paper: Often found in art and craft shops, this label means the paper will not go yellow or brittle over time. It's not essential but isn't too expensive, so recommended if you want to keep your work in tip top shape.

Draw with a viewfinder

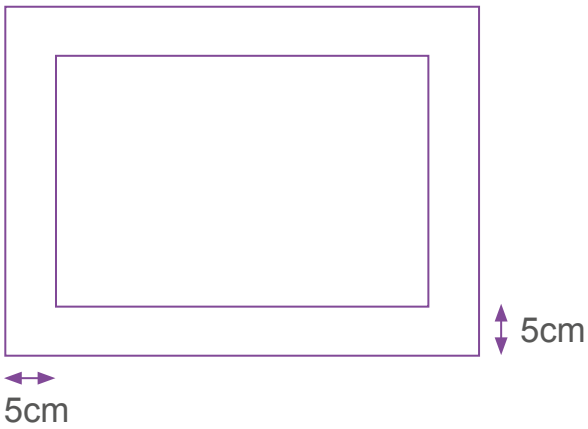
Deciding what to draw can be difficult for anyone, so this activity uses a viewfinder to help you make that decision. If you make a drawing outside, a viewfinder could be attached to the side of your easel but it works just as well attached to the inside of a window – it can be tricky getting outside when the weather's bad but you can still use the outside as inspiration for drawing inside, and it'll be warmer too.

Ingredients

- Drawing paper – A4 or A3 cartridge paper is fine, or thick A4 copying paper
- Card – about 10cm (4") longer and 10cm (4") wider than your paper – cereal boxes are fine
- Scissors or craft knife
- Ruler or straight edge
- Masking tape
- Drawing board or rigid tray big enough to tape your paper to
- Pencils – drawing pencils vary from hard to soft – the scale runs from 9H to 8B, with 9H as a very fine hard line and 8B as a very dark smudgy tone – most everyday pencils are in the middle – HB, so for this activity it would be good to have an HB, 2B and 4B
- Eraser

Method

1 A viewfinder is basically a frame made by cutting a rectangle out of the centre of the card. Make the depth of the frame 5cm (2”) all round. The hole in the middle should end up roughly the same size as your drawing paper.



2 Chose a bright window and tape the viewfinder to the inside, at sitting height.

3 Tape your paper to the board or tray. The aim is to draw only what you can see through the viewfinder. As the viewfinder and the paper are the same size it should be easier to fit everything in. It might be easier and more interesting to think of it as copying a pattern rather than aiming to draw the actual garden.

4 Try drawing with the HB pencil first, using just line rather than shading.

5 Once everything’s in place, use the 2B and 4B pencils to make certain shapes stand out by emphasising the edges or shading darker areas.

Make a mosaic calendar

It's easy to forget the number of things we do over the course of a year, so this is a chance to remember what we've enjoyed and what will inspire us next year. A mosaic is traditionally one large picture made from many small pieces of coloured tiles or ceramic.

In this activity the small tiles are replaced by torn or cut paper but with an added twist – the paper is actually images of things that happened during the year.

Ingredients

- 1 sheet of A4 size thick paper or thin card
- Ruler
- Pencil
- Glue
- Ribbon
- Hole punch or similar
- Scissors
- Images that relate to your year – see stage 1 overleaf
- Pre-printed paper calendar – available from stationers and craft shops, these don't have pictures and only show the dates for the coming year, with each month printed on a separate small sheet, stapled into a small booklet

Method

1 Gather up images that relate to the past year. These could be photos of actual events, people or objects, or images from magazines that remind you of what's taken place, e.g. what grew in the garden or the colour of some favourite new shoes. You'll be cutting the images into smaller pieces so you may want to use photocopies of precious ones.

2 Decide what colour the spaces in between your images will be. Traditionally this 'grout' on a mosaic would be a neutral colour but you can use coloured A4 paper or card as a background instead of white. Choose a colour that will make the images stand out.

3 On the paper/card, lightly draw a grid of squares over the whole page, measuring about 2.5cm x 2.5cm (1"x1"). You should end up with about 88 squares and a strip of extra paper at the bottom of the page.

4 Tear or cut your images into small pieces to fit into the squares with a little space between each piece. The pieces don't have to be exactly the same size.

5 Decide on the layout of the torn pieces – if you want to be able to recognise the original images you might need to stick them closer together and in a logical order. A more random placing will create a more abstract final image with the emphasis on colour and texture. Stick the pieces down and once they're dry, rub out any pencil marks.

6 Make a couple of holes in the bottom of the paper/card, thread the ribbon through and fix onto the calendar.

Make some bunting

Homemade bunting is a lovely way to celebrate special occasions like birthdays, anniversaries, a welcome home or cultural festivals.

The suggestion below creates simple, bright bunting in red, green and white for a Christmas decoration.

Ingredients

- Electrical tape in red, green and white – available from DIY shops
- 2.5m (96") ribbon or cord
- 2.8m (114") ribbon or cord in another colour, cut into 14 lengths of approximately 20cm (8”)
- Ruler
- Pencil
- 8 paper plates
- Hole punch or similar
- Scissors

Method

1 Draw a basic Christmas tree or star shape on one plate and cut it out.

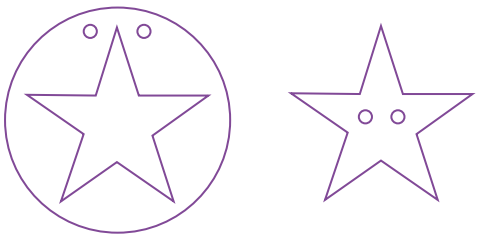
2 Take the electrical tape and stick it in multi-coloured stripes across the remaining 7 plates so that none of the card is showing. Try not to stretch the tape when you're sticking it down.

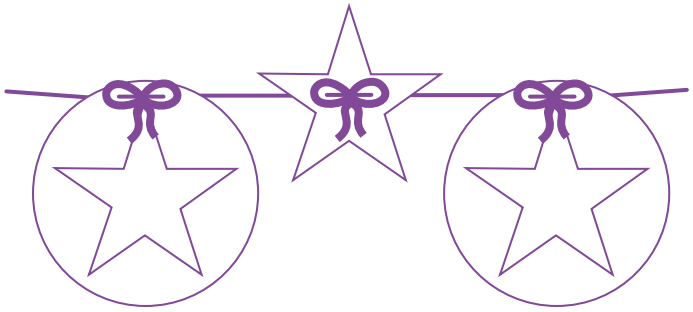
3 On the back of each plate, draw a Christmas tree or star using the one you have already made as a template. Carefully cut the shapes out.

4 Make two holes at the top of each plate and in the middle of each star.

5 Take one of the stars and thread the long ribbon in one hole from the back, across the front and out the second hole. Do the same with a plate, then another star, until all the shapes are strung and face the same way.

6 Spread the shapes out equally along the long ribbon. Take a short length of other ribbon and tie it in a bow onto the front of each shape to stop it sliding.





Sew some gift tags

Make your presents even more personalised and encourage mobility in the fingers by making some special gift tags. This activity uses basic paper luggage tags as a base, which you can add to with scraps of fabric or paper, and any other craft additions you have.

Ingredients

- Pack of paper luggage tags – available from stationers
- Selection of thin fabric and paper – try cutting up clothes destined for the charity shop, old gift wrap, interesting pictures from magazines etc
- Selection of buttons
- Scissors – ones with a decorative cutting edge are useful
- Chunky sewing needle
- Top-stitching thread
- Ribbon or wool
- *Optional* – perforator
- *Optional* – rubber stamp with text or image

Method

1 Decide on your colour scheme – are you making tags as a set or aiming to match the colours to the person who will receive the gift?

2 Cut out your fabric and paper; the aim is to have tags made of 4 layers – the bottom layer is the original luggage tag, then two layers of fabric and/or paper, then a top layer of paper. Each layer should be cut slightly smaller than the one underneath so you can see all the colours at once. The top paper layer is where you write the name of the person who the present is for, so avoid making this layer from heavily patterned paper.

3 For each tag, hold everything in place by sewing a button at one end with the top-stitching thread, making sure the thread goes through all 4 layers.

4 Use the existing hole in the luggage tag base to thread a new piece of ribbon or wool through, to attach the tag to the present.

5 The tags can be embellished with other craft or sewing items you already have, with bits of tinsel, by hand sewing along the edges of the layers, or by using a perforator to make patterns on the paper. Rubber ink stamps with Christmas text or images are also available from craft shops.

Play 'Picture Consequences'

This is a drawn version of the classic Consequences game and just as useful as a creative brain teaser.

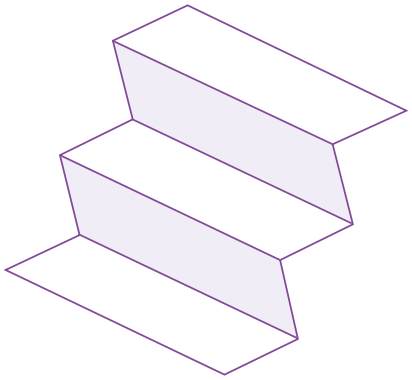
The aim of the game is to draw a person, character or animal in partnership with another person, but where each person draws a separate bit not knowing what the other parts look like. It works best if you really go to town on your drawings as this makes the end result very funny.

You can play Picture Consequences with more than two people and have several pieces of paper circulating around the group at the same time.

Just make sure the paper gets passed in the same direction (e.g. always pass it to the person to your right), and that all the steps are completed. A group game can create an army of amusing characters to enjoy.

Ingredients

- Paper
- Pens or pencils



Method

1 Player One draws the head of a person, character or animal at the top of the page, then folds over the paper so the drawing can't be seen and hands it to Player Two.

2 Player Two draws the next section of body, from neck to waist including the arms or wings (or both), then folds over the paper and passes it back to Player One.

3 Player One draws from the waist to the top of the legs (possibly including a tail), folds over the paper and passes it back.

4 Player Two draws the legs down to the feet, folds it over and passes it back.

5 Player One draws the feet, folds it over and passes it back.

6 Player Two unfolds the paper to reveal the whole drawing.

Watch an old film

It's fun to treat this as a special event rather than just watching the TV, so think about making popcorn or special snacks, or dressing up for the film. If you can access one, using a projector and screen will make it even more special. Thanks to the internet, vintage films are fairly easy to get hold of and there are several commercial websites who sell DVDs of classic films cheaply, but try your library as well.

Aberdeenshire Council's Libraries and Museum services have old documentaries about working lives, significant national events or the development of towns and technologies, all of which might strike a chord. Being able to recognise places or activities from long ago can be very exciting and reassuring – and might lead to surprising conversations.

Inviting others to watch the film with you can be a lovely way to get people to interact through a shared interest. Older men in particular can find it easier to chat whilst doing an activity rather than sitting down for a gossip, and younger family members might find this a good way to interact with the older generation as well.

However, if you are showing film in a public place or multi-occupancy dwelling like a care home, you will need a license to do this on a regular basis. Licenses vary depending on which films you are watching, so it's best to check with your local authority for guidelines.

Ingredients

- Film
- TV or screen and projector
- Snacks

Method

1 Very easy - watch the film!

Clap the 'Name Calling' song

Getting personal with your friends and family

A music game where the names of your friends and family are used in a musically rhythmic way.

Ingredients

- A list of the people in the group, their friends and family members
- Hands for clapping (or a pen to tap on a table)

Method

1 Say the name of someone in the group while at the same time clapping the sounds of their name. *Here are a few examples:*

John CLAP		Smith CLAP	
Bren- CLAP	-da CLAP	Dean CLAP	
Kate CLAP		Thom- CLAP	-pson CLAP
All- CLAP	-an CLAP	Berk- CLAP	-ley CLAP

2 **Quiz Time** – choose a few names and clap the rhythm of each. Once everyone is used to these 'rhythm names', one person claps someone's 'rhythm name' (perhaps saying the name in their head at the same time to help). The others guess who it is. It is possible that more than one person in the group will have the same rhythm.

3 **One to One** – if you are in a one to one situation, the list of names could be family members or friends. Applying a set rhythm to each name may help in remembering their friends and family. Try writing their names and 'rhythm names' down (as above).

Drum the 'Jungle Rhythms' song

Messages from the dense jungle

Listen to the rhythmic messages played on the drum and repeat them exactly to pass them on through the jungle.

Ingredients

- The music for this activity can be found on the CD that accompanies the hard copy workbook, or online at https://soundcloud.com/search/sets?q=create%20connect
- One drum per participant (or any resonant box or plastic tub)
- A drumstick or wooden spoon or just use your hand

Method

1 Play the track, 'Jungle Rhythms with the Leader'.

2 After a spoken introduction, a short rhythm will be played to you on a drum.

Listen carefully as you will have to repeat that rhythm exactly as you heard it and immediately afterwards. There are 8 messages in all, so listen carefully *(continued overleaf)*.

Method (continued)

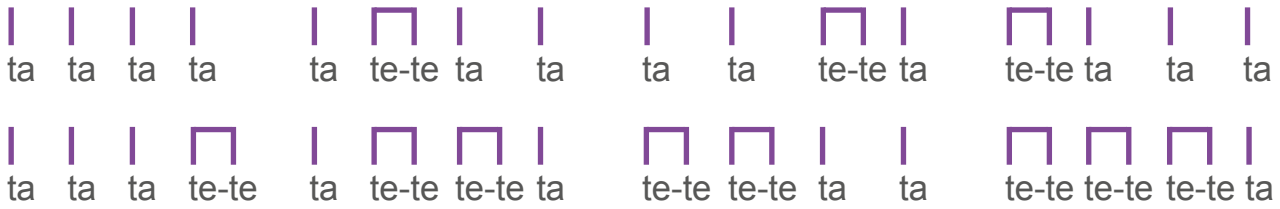
3 All the messages are made up of just two musical rhythms – a one beat note (ta) and two half beat notes (te-te). The rhythms start off simply, with lots of one beat notes, but gradually mix together both note durations as the 'messages' become more complex.

4 Near the end there is another spoken instruction inviting you to make up your own messages until the music stops. This is a 'free-for-all', so there are no right or wrong rhythms, just enjoy yourself.

5 Now choose a leader – play the track 'Jungle Rhythms without the Leader'. This time the spoken introduction is just 'Jungle Drums, Jungle Drums', so the leader will have to say the other words, 'Listen to my message'; then after the next 'Jungle Drums, Jungle Drums', the leader says 'Repeat my message'. There is time for you to make up four rhythms on this track.

Here are the rhythms used in the 'Jungle Rhythms with the Leader' track for you to re-use when you are the leader. Read from left to right and use the rhythm names 'ta' (one sound on one beat) and 'te-te' (two sounds on one beat) to help.

Alternatively, the rhythm could be someone's name or favourite sports team or the town that you live in or were born in. Anything goes.



Sing the 'Hello' song

With a smile on your face and in your eyes, sing hello to everyone around you.

Ingredients

- The music for this activity can be found on the CD that accompanies the hard copy workbook, or online at https://soundcloud.com/search/sets?q=create%20connect
- Your voice
- A smile for everyone you sing hello to

Method

1 The song is structured as a 'call and response' activity. So the singer on the 'Hello Song with singer' track is called Gordon. He leads by singing the first phrase of the song and the group replies by using the same melody and 'Gordon' instead of 'everyone'.

Singer: '*Hello everyone, hello.*'

Group: '*Hello Gordon, hello*.'

So in verse 1, Gordon is singing hello to everyone and everyone sings back to Gordon.

2 In the second verse, it's just the ladies who are addressed.

3 For the next verse, it's just the gentlemen who need to sing hello.

4 Listen carefully to the next verse. Both the ladies and gentlemen need to sing, but at different times.

5 Then the last verse is a mixture of everyone, ladies or gentlemen.

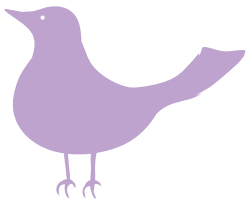
6 Once you know the song well, use the 'Hello Song without singer' track, so that one of you can lead the song, singing hello to the group, ladies only, gentlemen only or singing hello to one person using their name. After a while, it would also be possible to sing the 'Hello Song' without the track.

Make a bird feeder

This time of year we could all do with a little help to keep healthy, so show the birds you care by making a simple bird feeder. This method uses a recycled carton but you could also use a large pine cone filled with peanut butter hung on a string for an even quicker food station.

Ingredients

- Clean empty juice or milk carton
- Two twigs or sticks about 25cm (10”) long
- Scissors
- Pen or felt tip
- *Optional* – knitting needle
- String
- Bird seed
- *Optional* – calendar/record sheet
- *Optional* – bird identification book



Method

1 Draw a large rectangle on each side of the carton and cut it out. These holes are where the birds will feed from.

2 On one side, make a smaller hole below the rectangular hole with the scissors or knitting needle, and repeat this on the opposite side of the carton. Feed a twig through both holes so it becomes a level perch. Do this again for the other two sides of the carton and remaining twig.

3 Make tiny holes in the base to allow rain to drain away but not so big that seeds will fall out. These might be easier made with a thin knitting needle or chunky sewing needle.

4 Punch two holes through the top of the carton and thread the string through to hang the feeder up.

5 Fill the feeder with bird seeds and hang it somewhere it can been seen from inside the home.

6 Keep a bird book handy and record what you see over the course of the year. You could join the thousands of people who send their results into the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch, the world's largest wildlife survey: www.rspb.org.uk

Write an alphabet poem

Good as an exercise for the brain as well as creativity, alphabet poems work on the basis that each line begins with the next letter in the alphabet:

Ingredients

- Paper
- Something to write with
- *Optional* – thick paper or card
- *Optional* – 20cm (8”) ribbon

Animals sleeping, out of the cold

Birds migrated, off to the South

Colours deadened, mists rolling in

Downpours a-plenty, dreary and dim

Everyone grumpy, stuck in the house –

Fantastic sunshine, well who’d have thought!

Method

1 Decide on how many letters you want to work with. It's challenging to use the whole alphabet but incorporating the first few letters gives a useful structure to write with.

2 You can work with a theme, like the poem overleaf about winter, or write in a more random way and create a nonsense poem. It doesn't need to rhyme.

3 The winter poem was written using a List form which makes it easier to write a concise poem if you're not keen or confident enough to write more elaborately.

4 Take time to write a few versions. Once you've got it cracked, you could copy the finished poem onto the thick paper or card, attach the ribbon and hang to display. You could use the poem to make a birthday or thank you card for someone.

5 Another version of an alphabet poem would be to space each line so the alphabet runs down the middle of the page:

Sleeping **A**nimals, out of the cold

Migrated **B**irds, flown off to the South

Deadened cool **C**olours, mists rolling in

Downpours a-plenty, **D**reary and dim

Everyone grumpy, **E**verything still –

A soft white **F**lurry; beauty's returned

Collage a self-portrait

We tend to have a lot of worries about what we look like – this activity is a fun way to challenge those feelings, have a giggle and explore how you want to present yourself today. (Tomorrow you might want to show another side of our character!)

Ingredients

- Piece of card or cardboard as the base, at least A4 size
- Assorted paper – magazines, newspapers, gift wrap, paper bags, old cards, bank statements etc
- Scissors
- Washable PVA or craft glue and spreader or brush
- Pencil
- *Optional* – mirror – you know what you look like but studying your face for the purpose of a portrait can be helpful in terms of colour, character and shape

Method

1 Cover the table or work surface to protect it from glue.

2 Spread out all the materials in easy reach. For some people living with dementia making decisions can be difficult, in which case keep the range of materials small and try to include distinctive colours.

3 You could draw the basic shape of a face with marks for eyes, nose and mouth but don't get too detailed as these marks will be covered up eventually. Working without any kind of guide can be exciting and intriguing – sometimes the face will end up being distorted as the artist emphasises features they feel are important.

4 Look through the magazines etc and tear out any colours or textures you think you might use for skin, hair, eyes etc. Your range of colours doesn't have to be realistic. You could try choosing colours that express your character, using a Colour Wheel:

Colours that are opposite each other on the wheel, e.g. red and green, blue and orange, will create a vivid, energetic image. Colours that sit next to each other make for a calmer, gentler feel.

5 Cut or tear the papers into small pieces to make it easier to build up detail, then start sticking them onto your card base. Remember you can just stick more paper on top of areas you're not happy with. If your finished artwork is very wet, weight it down to dry to avoid it curling at the edges.

Create a fabric collage with transfer paint

This activity creates a stock of images that can be transferred repeatedly onto fabric, so if you enjoy craft projects this could be useful as well as fun. The transfer dyes or paints used normally come in packs of 6 and cost around £16 at time of writing. You can create your images from all kinds of things – leaves and feathers make particularly good prints so get outside and get collecting!

Ingredients

To make the stock of images:

- Set of transfer dyes or paints – available from art shops or online
- Several sheets of standard paper used with computer printers or photocopiers
- Various sized paint brushes
- Things to make prints with

To make the prints:

- Iron
- Pale fabric – synthetics work best but you'll also get a good print on cotton or silk

Method

1 To make your stock of images you can either gather objects to take prints from, or make freehand patterns. If you're using an object, e.g. a leaf, paint it with the transfer paints and print it neatly onto the paper. If you're making patterns, just paint directly onto the paper. Note – the final image will be in reverse so be careful if you include letters or numbers. Use a separate piece of paper for each image.

2 Make your stock of images as extensive as you can by using different colours on the same object. The transfer paints can be mixed together or diluted to make pastel shades, so you can be as inventive as you like.

3 You can also make images by painting around an object, so you end up with a negative shape. This works well if you use a sponge to apply the paint.

4 Once the paper is dry you can start to make your image collage on fabric. Most transfer paints are best suited to synthetic fabrics; natural fabrics will take a good print but eventually fade if left in strong light. So, if you're not too worried about making an heirloom, you could use a blank artist canvas as a base for your collage. The less expensive versions of these are more than adequate for use with transfer paints. Whatever the fabric, the paler the better in order for the collage to show up.

5 To make the collage, choose one of your image sheets and place the paper face down on the fabric.

6 Iron the paper using a medium heat with no steam. The image should now be transferred to the fabric. Repeat with other image sheets, overlapping the images to create a unique artwork.

7 The image sheets can be reused for years, so store them safely. You can also print onto paper to make cards and gift tags.

Draw with oil pastels

Oil pastels are a cross between chalk pastels and wax crayons. They are easy to use and loved by artists because of their intense colours. Happily, they also come in a range of prices – the better quality ones cost more but cheap and cheerful are widely available too. You can buy them in packs or individually from art/craft shops and some toy shops. Most of the packs will have a range of bright primary colours but if possible buy some subtle colours as well; it's important to offer a range of 'adult' colours and not stick to childish primaries. Also, people generally feel more comfortable using softer colours – they tend to reflect the colours of our clothes, furnishings and landscape.

This activity is a good way to start drawing if you're feeling nervous about the idea of making art.

Ingredients

- An A4 image to work from – magazines, travel brochures or the internet are good sources, and landscapes, seascapes or harbour views work well for this activity
- Oil pastels in a range of colours, at least 12
- Tracing paper or greaseproof paper
- Scissors
- Pencil
- Cellotape or masking tape
- Frame or card mount the same size as the image
- *Optional* — turpentine (from art shops or DIY shops) and soft cloth

Method

1 Find a strong image you like and tape it securely to a table or tray.

2 Cut a piece of tracing or greaseproof paper the same size as the image, and tape it securely on top of the image.

3 Use the pencil to lightly trace the main shapes from the image onto the tracing paper.

4 Now the fun bit – use the oil pastels to create your picture on the tracing paper using the pencil lines as a guide. You can copy the original colours faithfully or make up your own colour scheme. Try layering up the colours to make new ones on the paper. You can't really rub out oil pastels, but you can layer over the top with another colour if you don't like what you've done.

5 If you want to create a thin layer of colour or 'wash', make some marks with the pastel, then put a little turpentine on the cloth, rub the coloured marks and the colour will thin out. This is great for creating skies or getting the sense of distance in a picture; colours appear stronger the closer they are to us, paler the further away.

6 When you're happy with the colours, you might want to draw the outlines of the main shapes back in again with the pencil, to add some detail.

7 Attach both layers of paper behind the mount or frame and display.

Make a dancing memory box

We might not be able to dance the night away any more but we can rediscover those special times and places through music and memories. Using music as a starting point this activity uses discussion, images and objects to build a personalised memory box – take time to enjoy the process and spread the activity over a few days. A lovely thing to have, a memory box is also a great way to share family stories and local history with other people.

Ingredients

- Selection of music from your dancing days
- Images that relate to your dancing days
- Sturdy shoe box or similar
- Small piece of thin card – cereal packet will do
- Felt tips or coloured pencils
- Scissors
- Glue – glue dots or sticks are good as they don't make paper wrinkle
- Sticky tape

Method

1 Start by playing some music from a time in your life when you went out dancing. For most people this will be in their teens and twenties, but if you're choosing music for someone else ask them for suggestions – don't assume their age or nationality will dictate the type of music they enjoyed.

2 Think about what you might have worn, where you went, who you went with.

3 Gather memorabilia that connects to your dancing days – photos, tickets, letters etc. Looking at these will spark other memories of venues and bands. Take some time to gather images of these too, maybe visit the library to find images of tickets, playbills and dancehalls. Aberdeenshire Council Libraries and Museums Service has extensive local history collections and can help with this.

4 Once you have your images, turn the shoe box on its side with the open side facing you, and start to paste in your images onto the back wall of the box. The images can overlap, but make sure they all face the same way, so you don't end up with writing or buildings upside down.

5 Decorate the end walls, floor and ceiling of the box as well – include any small bits of memorabilia you have like a special brooch, dried flower, ticket, glove etc. You might want to think about decorating the outside of the box too.

6 Lastly, make a simple card figure of yourself. Do this by making a drawing about 8cm (3") high on the thin card. Whether it's a masterpiece or a stick figure, have fun and draw on your favourite dancing clothes and colour them in. Cut out a corner of card and tape it to the back of the figure to make it stand up, then stick it to the floor of your memory box to complete the scene.

Make hand-made beads

This activity uses a polymer clay that you bake in the oven to harden. It comes in a huge range of colours and feels like children's modelling clay or a hard dough. Working with the clay can be quite therapeutic and there are levels of technique to make it as complex as you like. As well as jewellery, think about using beads in other ways – maybe attached to a bag to help the owner identify it, or hung from a zip to make it easier to grasp.

Ingredients

- Assorted colours of oven baked polymer clay – several brands are available from craft shops – it comes in small packets which can be pricey so choose your colours wisely; you don't need a lot of clay to make a bead
- Rolling pin
- Blunt knife or clay cutting tool
- Knitting or crochet needle
- Oven
- Sheet of parchment or greaseproof paper
- Sandpaper or emery board
- *Optional* – small shaped cutters available from cooking or craft shops

Method

1 Clay picks up anything it comes into contact with so tape the parchment or greaseproof paper to the table to make a clean non-stick surface.

2 Break off some clay and soften it between your fingers.

3 To make plain beads just roll the clay around between the palms of your hands until it's the shape you want. If you have small enough shaped cutters, you can make beads by rolling out a thick piece of clay and cutting out the shape as you would a biscuit.

4 To make patterned beads, the easiest method is to make the basic bead as above, then roll out a very thin sausage of another colour. Use this to wrap around the bead, pressing to make sure it's firmly attached.

5 More complex patterned beads can be made by making clay 'canes'. This involves rolling out a series of different coloured clay sausages, making sure some are very thin, about 2mm (⅛") in diameter. Take one of the fatter sausages and roll it flat, then gather up some of the thin strands and lay them on top of the flat clay. Wrap the flat clay around the strands so you end up with a long sausage of clay with a multi-coloured core – this is a 'cane'. Cut the cane into thin slices and press them onto a basic clay bead to make a pattern.

6 Gently push the needle through the centre of the bead to make a hole, supporting the bead with one hand and rotating the needle as you go.

7 Cook in the oven according the clay manufacturer's instructions.

8 Once cooked, use the sandpaper or emery board to knock off any rough edges and varnish if required.

Look at paintings and pictures

Everyone has an opinion on what art they like and what they think is awful, so get them talking about it!

Ingredients

- Galleries and museums
- Temporary exhibitions in libraries, schools, festivals, colleges, community centres
- Library books

Method

1 Find out what's available to you. Most galleries and museums offer guided tours which can be very useful if you're not familiar with that type of place or a particular artist's work.

Some also offer 'relaxed' tours, specifically geared to people living with dementia and carers. These are paced accordingly and stimulating with lots of time for discussion. It may be worth ringing ahead to find out the best time to visit (avoiding large noisy school groups but with plenty of time to visit the café). Most galleries and museums supply wheelchairs or folding chairs for the use of visitors.

(continued overleaf)

Method (continued)

2 Seeing the real thing is always better than looking at a reproduction but clear, large scale images in books work well too. Libraries are a good source of art books and some will deliver to your door as they can be large and heavy. Books that are written or co-written by the artists themselves can offer a real insight into their ideas and ways of working. Libraries will also have listings for local exhibitions.

3 Choose a theme that interests you both. This could be based around personal experience or just what draws your eye, e.g.

- subject matter (farm work, women at war, portraits)
- timeline (1750-1800, 1960s)
- art movement (impressionists, pop-art)
- artist (Matisse, Renoir, Picasso)

4 If you're looking at artwork based on personal experience, discuss the common ground, e.g.

- did you have similar objects at home or work?
- do you wear the same clothing or did you have the same hair-do?
- do you have photos of the same place?
- do the people in the painting remind you of anyone?

5 If you're looking at artwork based on what draws your eye, discuss what that is, e.g.

- a particular colour or texture and the emotions associated with it
- does it make you think of something in particular?
- is there a story in the picture and if so, what will happen next?

6 You can continue this activity by collecting postcards or images in magazines and pasting them into a scrap book for an instant conversation starter, or useful distraction later on.

Spend time with an animal friend

Caring for a pet can be extremely rewarding, but simply spending time with an animal can be very therapeutic and doesn't have to be a demanding or long term commitment.

Research has suggested that contact with animals can:

- Lower blood pressure and pulse rate
- Ease depression
- Create more opportunities to meet people
- Help older people become more active
- Offer affection and prevent loneliness or boredom
- Offer a sense of security

You may have friends or family with pets who could visit you at home, or share a dog walk if mobility allows.

However, some people can become agitated in the presence of certain animals or have allergic reactions, so if you're organising a visit for someone else, check first. Individual preference is very important – an ex-farmer may want to spend time with a working dog but someone else may be desperate to encounter a komodo dragon.

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Some care homes and sheltered housing now welcome visits from friendly pets, providing a change to routine and new topic of conversation. www.petsastherapy.org is a national charity that brings dogs and cats into care homes and sheltered housing across Britain. The website has links to local contacts across Britain.

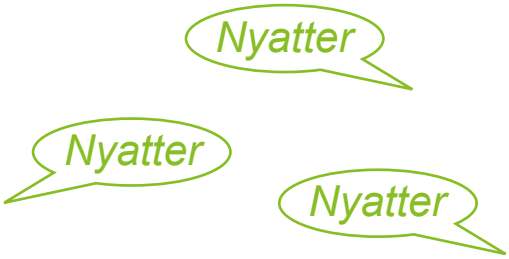
In spring, you could share the delight of being close to newborn animals at a city farm, animal sanctuary or zoo. City farms are often community or volunteer led, offering a chance to improve awareness of farming and animals, alongside strengthened community relationships. Some offer opportunities to watch or take part in feeding, or even 'adopt' an animal by donating some money to its upkeep.

To find a city farm near you go to www.farmgarden.org.uk/farms-gardens/your-region/map. Select the animal icon and the map will show city farms across you area. There is also an option to select community gardens.

Chant the 'Nyatter, Nyatter, Nyatter' song

A poem to quieten down a noisy crowd in a humorous way

Les Wheeler wrote this Doric rhyme which has been used in a music education resource for pre-school staff called 'Sing-a-Ring', published by Aberdeenshire Council. It's relevant for any noisy situation.



Ingredients

- The poem:

Nyatter, Nyatter, Nyatter

Spik, Spik, Spik

Cleck, Cleck, Cleckin'

Gaes on aa wik

Aa this noise is affa

Is it ony eese

Weesht! Keep quiet

An we'll aa hae PEACE

- Your voice
- Your imagination
- A musical steady beat

Method

1 Imagine a room full of people noisily chatting. You are a bit exasperated with this, so start the poem quietly, perhaps 'under your breath'. As you progress through the poem, you gradually get more and more frustrated with everyone, so your voice should get louder and louder up to the words '*Weesht!' Keep quiet*'.

2 Express the poem with movement as well. Use your hands to mimic the '*nyatter*', '*spik*' and '*cleck*' words and to put over your ears at '*Aa this noise is affa*'. Also, your arms on '*Aa this noise is affa*', to show who's making the noise and on '*Weesht! Keep quiet*' to grab the group's attention.

3 Enjoy speaking the rhythmic and percussive sounds in this amusing poem. Remember to always say the rhyme at a steady pace – the musical beat.

Recite the 'Calendar' chant

In this activity you will say a short poem about the seasons and months of the year. Then chant the months of the year in order.

This is a group activity with a chance for each of you to grab some of the limelight for yourself when your birth month is mentioned.

Ingredients

- The poem 'Winter, Spring, Summer, Autumn':

  Winter, Spring, Summer, Autumn,

  Four long seasons of the year,

  Each, for three whole months we'll welcome,

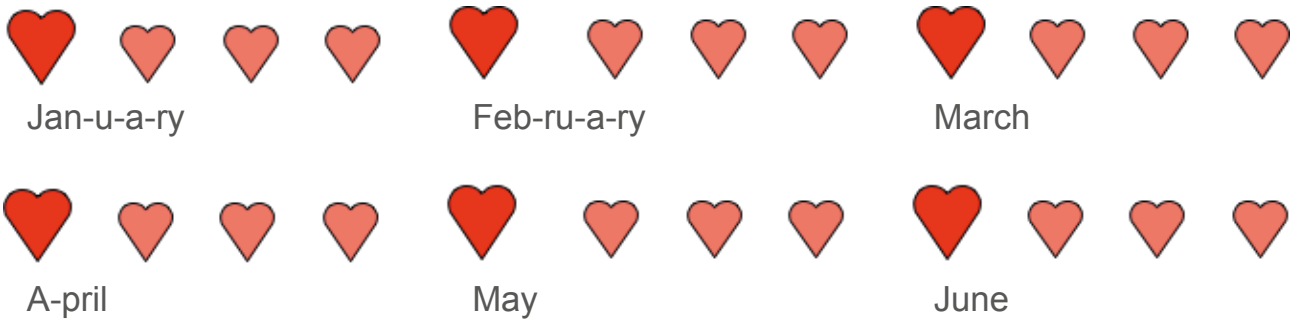
  When should we send birthday cheer?

- A drum or other small percussion instrument suitable for keeping the beat

Method

1 Say the rhyme together, quite slowly, tapping your lap to the steady beat. Someone in the group can help everyone stay together by playing the steady beat on a drum (or by clapping).

2 Then chant through the months of the year like this (the heart shape represents the steady beat/pulse that you will need to keep throughout the activity):



and so on.

3 When you get to the month in which you were born, then wave your arms and say your name in the two beats that are after each month.

For example:

Sing the 'Easter Eggs' song

Tasty shells with goodies inside

Chocolate eggs and bunnies are synonymous with the Spring and the festival of Easter.

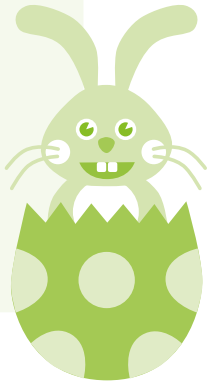
Ingredients

- Egg Shakers – these could be maracas or something home-made (a small plastic tub with dried peas; split lentils inside two plastic cups which are taped together)
- The music for this activity can be found on the CD that accompanies the hard copy workbook, or online at https://soundcloud.com/search/sets?q=create%20connect

Easter eggs, Easter eggs, yellow, pink and blue.

Chocolate bunnies, sugar bunnies, some for me and you.

- Your voice
- Some chocolate for afterwards?!



Method

1 Simply sing along with the track to get used to the song first. Tapping the steady beat would be beneficial at this point as well.

2 Once you're happy that you've got the beat, then sing the song again but this time concentrate on the words. Clap once for every syllable that you sing. When you clap the syllables, then you're clapping the rhythm of the music.

3 Now challenge yourself to sing the song and tap the beat (with your foot) and clap the rhythm, both at the same time.

4 Let's use your maracas now. Shake your maracas to the rhythm of '*Easter Eggs*' over and over. Saying the words as you do this will help you to learn the rhythm:

East-	-er	Eggs	East-	-er	Eggs
CLAP	CLAP	CLAP	CLAP	CLAP	CLAP

5 So, sing the song whilst playing this repeated rhythm on your maracas.

6 Finally, divide yourselves into groups:

- One group plays the beat on a drum or equivalent home-made drum.
- A second group claps the rhythm of the words.
- A third group plays the repeated rhythm on their maracas.
- EVERYONE SINGS!

7 Make up your own words about Easter eggs. For example,

Easter eggs, Easter eggs,
in the shops for you.

Bigger ones are better ones,
filled with sweets to chew!

Make a pin wheel for the garden

Make the most of the March winds and make a colourful pin wheel to spin in the garden. Easy and very satisfying to make, they make a great addition to any garden or window box devoid of colour in early spring.

Ingredients

- Square piece of thin card or plastic at least 15x15cm (6”x6”) – you can also use paper but it will get soggy unless laminated
- Lightweight coloured or shiny decorations – stickers and sequins are good
- Solvent based glue or glue dots
- Length of dowel at least 30cm (12”) long
- Scissors
- Ruler
- Pencil
- Long map pin or thin nail
- A couple of small beads with holes big enough to thread onto the map pin or nail

Method

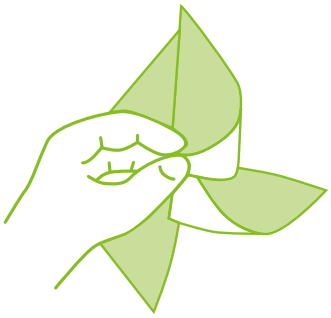
1 Fold your square of paper/card/ plastic diagonally corner to corner and unfold. Repeat with the opposite corners so the creases make a diagonal cross.

2 Take the pencil and make a mark along each crease about a third away from the centre of the square.

3 Cut along each crease line from the outside edge of the square to the pencil mark.

4 Stick on any colourful or shiny decorations you have, but make sure they're not heavy or cover the cuts in the square. Repeat on the other side of the square.

5 Take every other point into the centre and stick the pin or nail through all four points.



6 Turn the wheel over and make sure the pin is coming through the exact centre. Wriggle it around a bit to make sure the wheel will move freely.

7 Thread a couple of beads onto the pin, then stick the pin into the dowel.

8 Display in the garden.

Plant aromatic herbs

As we age our senses can diminish, so make up for it by creating an aromatic herb garden to delight your sense of smell. As well as being useful in the kitchen, herbs like bay, rosemary, sage and fennel give off fantastic smells when brushed against. Combine them with eucalyptus, pine and lavender for a lovely scent along a garden path or blowing in from a window box.

Ingredients

- Variety of herbs and aromatic seedlings
- For window boxes and containers:
  - Compost, ideally designed for containers, or add some organic fertiliser
  - Gravel for drainage

Method

1 For window boxes and containers – make sure there are drainage holes. Line with a bed of 3-5cm (1”- 2½”) gravel. For garden borders – ensure the soil isn’t compacted by lifting and working through it a few times. If it’s a clay soil, add some stones to help drainage.

2 Space the plants out to allow for growth, covering the root ball with about 1.5cm (½”) soil and press down make sure it’s embedded. If the root ball is in a tight knot, tease it out to allow the roots to expand.

3 Water generously, but ensure any containers are draining well. To avoid soil spilling over the edge of the container you could cover the soil with white gravel – this will also show of the texture of the plants.

4 Water regularly in warm weather, including the leaves. (Note – don’t water the leaves on Basil as this will cause rot).

5 As well as enjoying the plants outside, you can bring bundles of them in and dry them for pot pourri, or to put in clothing and bed linen drawers for a lovely natural smell. Lavender is also used to repel moths.

Plant tomato hanging baskets

You don't need a garden or even a grow bag to harvest home-grown tomatoes, you can create colourful hanging baskets with them instead. A hanging basket by the window or door can provide a constantly changing source of conversation as the plants grow. Cultivating the plants is a three stage process but a rewarding one. To help keep pests away, try adding flowers like lobelia around the edge of the basket.

Ingredients

- Hanging basket
- Tomato seeds – dwarf bush varieties like Garden Pearle are good for hanging baskets and produce lovely sweet cherry tomatoes
- A few 7.5cm (3") pots
- General purpose compost
- *Optional* – vermiculite
- Water crystals
- Tomato plant food
- Scrap book

Method

1 Fill one pot with compost and water.

2 Thinly scatter the seeds – they tend to germinate quite well so you won't need a huge amount.

3 Ideally cover the seeds with vermiculite – this can be bought from garden centres and helps encourage the seedlings.

4 Put in a sunny window sill. The seeds should start to germinate in a couple of weeks and be ready to move to separate pots. Lift them carefully and make sure the roots are covered and watered in their new homes.

5 Once the roots start to show through the pots the seedlings can be moved to the basket. Fill the basket with compost combined with some water crystals – these help to ensure the basket doesn't dry out. Plant the seedlings and make sure the roots are covered and watered.

6 Hang the basket at a height that allows everyone to see and pick the fruit easily. Keep an eye on the temperature – if it's still chilly the basket might need to be taken in at night time until the fruit starts to appear.

7 In between waiting for the first fruits to appear, you could collect recipes from memory, friends or magazines and compile them in the scrap book. It doesn't need to be complicated – cherry tomatoes are great in hot or cold salads, skewered and grilled, or made into chutney. Old recipes can be good ways to connect the past and the present.

8 Once the first tomatoes come, feed the plants once a week and water regularly.

Write a haiku

A haiku is a form of Japanese writing that dates from the 9th century. Traditionally it follows three simple rules to create a very short poem that suggests a deeper meaning or connection with life. Modern versions can be serious or humorous, and writing one is a great way to gently exercise the brain.

Ingredients

- Paper
- Pen or pencil

Most haiku:

- Only contain 17 Japanese '*on*' (best translated as 'syllables').
- Combine two contrasting images or ideas.
- Make a reference to nature.

A famous haiku by renowned 17th century Japanese master, Bashō:

'Old Pond'

Old silent pond…
A frog jumps into the pond
Splash! Silence again.

A modern haiku by Michael Facherty

In the woodpile
The broken ax handle

Method

1 Decide what your theme is, or what moment you want to capture. Haiku often refer to small moments or observations rather than momentous occasions. Writing a haiku based on something you've actually seen or experienced can be helpful.

2 Try and capture two contrasting ideas or images – you could start by writing a longer description and then paring it back to 2 or 3 words that form the essence of what you are describing.

3 You can make it simpler by using 17 words for the whole poem instead of 17 syllables. In contrast, if you want more of a challenge, you can follow the traditional format whereby the 17 syllables are broken down into three lines of 5-7-5.

4 Other examples of traditional and modern haiku can be found online. If you're very keen there are plenty of forums and competitions to share your work and improve!