DEMENTIA GUIDE

The Dementia Edition

All 300 activities, sorted for the person living with dementia in front of you today — plus the exact words for the moments that are hardest.

🔑 **What this adds that the kit doesn't.** Every card in the main kit carries one line for memory loss. One line is enough on a good day. This book is for the other days. It tells you **which of the 300 activities still work at each stage**, gives you **one-step sensory versions** for when almost nothing else lands, and gives you **word-for-word scripts** for the moments that are specific to dementia: the same question for the tenth time, "I want to go home", the late-afternoon restlessness, the person who no longer knows who you are.

⚠️ **Read this first.** This is practical, non-clinical guidance for family caregivers, activity staff and volunteers. **It does not diagnose anything, it does not stage anyone medically, and it does not replace a doctor, a nurse, a therapist or a care plan.** The three "stages" in this book are working labels for planning an activity, nothing more. If someone's behaviour, mood, sleep, eating or movement changes suddenly, that is a reason to tell their doctor or care team, not a reason to change the activity.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

1 · Read Part 1 once. It describes the three stages by what you can *see* during an activity, and gives you a 30-second way to pick the stage for today.

2 · Use Part 2 every week. It is a map of all 300 activities, marked for the stages where they still work, with the swap to use when one doesn't.

3 · Keep Part 3 near you. These are the scripts for the hard moments. They are short on purpose: you will be reading them while something is happening.

4 · Use Part 4 on the hardest days. Twenty-four one-step sensory versions of activities you already own, for when the person can manage one action and no more.

5 · Read Part 5 before you need it. It tells you when to stop, and how to finish so the activity ends as a success, not a failure.

📌 **The one rule behind this whole book:** dementia changes what a person can do, not who they are. The aim is never to keep them busy. It is to give them a part to play, at a level where they can play it well.



PART 1 · THE THREE STAGES, AS YOU SEE THEM IN AN ACTIVITY

These descriptions are about what happens at the activity table. They are not a medical classification, and nobody needs a diagnosis or a label to use them.

Early stage · "joins in, but loses the thread"

What you tend to see:

- Follows an activity of two or three steps, with the occasional reminder
- Talks easily, especially about the distant past; recent things are patchy
- Notices their own mistakes, and can be embarrassed by them
- May avoid activities that feel like a test, or say "that's for children"
- Tires sooner than they used to, especially later in the day

What helps: keep the activity adult, keep the stakes low, and never ask "don't you remember?" Give them roles with status: the reader, the judge, the one who teaches you.

From the kit: every one of the 300 activities works at early stage at its written level. Use the ↓ line on each card when a day is harder than usual.

Middle stage · "one step at a time"

What you tend to see:

- Manages one step well, but a list of steps falls apart
- Recognises faces, voices and familiar objects better than names
- Hands still know old tasks (folding, pouring, sorting, wiping) even when words don't come

- Open questions ("What did you do today?") cause stress; a choice of two works better
- May get up and walk away, or lose interest after a few minutes
- More easily unsettled by noise, crowds and late afternoon

What helps: show, don't tell. Do the first step yourself, side by side, and let them copy. Swap questions for choices. Keep sessions short and the group small.

Late stage · "reached through the senses"

What you tend to see:

- Few words, or none; some people still sing or hum when they no longer speak
- Responds to touch, warmth, music, rhythm, smell and a familiar voice
- Attention lasts seconds to a few minutes, then drifts
- May not use an object for its purpose, and may put things in their mouth
- Tires very quickly; may be in a chair or in bed most of the day

What helps: one sensation, one action, one person at a time. You are not running an activity *for* them; you are sharing a moment *with* them. A smile, a squeeze of the hand or a change in breathing is a complete response.

⚠️ **Safety at late stage:** no small pieces (buttons, beads, coins, counters, dried beans, seeds), nothing sharp, nothing hot to drink, and nothing to eat or taste unless the care team has confirmed what is safe to swallow.

Choosing the stage for TODAY

Stages are not fixed. The same person can be "early" on Tuesday morning and "middle" on Thursday afternoon. Pick the stage for **today**, not the stage you picked last month.

The 30-second check (do it in this order, as part of saying hello):

TRY THIS	IF THEY...	PLAN FOR
Ask an open question: "*What shall we do this afternoon?*"	answer and the conversation flows	**Early**
Offer a choice of two: "*Music or cards?*"	pick one, by word, nod or pointing	**Middle**
Hand them a warm cup, a soft ball or a fabric square	react to it, but don't choose	**Late**

📌 **When in doubt, start one stage lower.** It is easy to step up when an activity is going well ("Shall we try the harder one?"). Stepping down in the middle of a failure is much harder on everyone.

Signs today is a lower-stage day: they didn't sleep, they've just had a meal, a visit or new medication, it's late afternoon, they're unwell, in pain, or the room is busy and loud. None of these is your fault, and none of them is a reason to skip the activity. They are a reason to choose an easier one.



PART 2 · THE MAP: ALL 300 ACTIVITIES, BY STAGE

How the activities were sorted

Every activity was sorted using its own card, and specifically its **memory-loss line**, with these rules:

- **Early ●** for all 300. Every card works at early stage at its written level.
- **Middle ●** when the card's memory-loss line gives a workable version: a choice instead of a question, an object instead of a word, mirroring instead of instructions.
- **Middle ○ (swap)** when the card itself says the activity is too abstract or should be skipped on a hard day. The swap the card recommends is in the notes column.
- **Late ●** only when the activity works **with no recall, no instructions and no speech**: through touch, warmth, rhythm, music, smell, a familiar motion, or simply being together. Anything with small pieces, sharp tools, standing, hot drinks or food is left out of late stage, whatever its card says, for safety.

📌 **Read the map as permission, not as a rule.** If someone at "late stage" lights up when you put on a card game they played for fifty years, play the card game.

> 📌 **In numbers:** all 300 work at early stage · 282 work at middle stage as written in their memory-loss line · 18 need the swap at middle stage · 92 also work at late stage.

1.1 · Early Years & Family

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
001	The First Job	●	●		
002	The House You Grew Up In	●	●		
003	Sunday Mornings	●	●		
004	Brothers and Sisters	●	●		
005	School Days	●	●		
006	The Family Car	●	●		
007	Chores	●	●		
008	Grandparents	●	●		
009	Money in the House	●	●		
010	Pets	●	●		
011	The Neighbours	●	●		
012	What You Wore	●	●	●	
013	The First Time You Left Home	●	○		middle: swap for #002
014	Nicknames	●	●		
015	Hands	●	●	●	

1.2 · Work & Trade

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
016	Payday	●	●		
017	The Tools of the Job	●	●		
018	The Journey to Work	●	●		
019	The Boss	●	○		middle: swap for #016
020	The Hardest Day	●	○		middle: skip on a hard day
021	Tea Break	●	●		hot drink: lukewarm only, never at late stage
022	What You Made	●	●		
023	The Uniform	●	●		

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
024	Going on Strike, or Not	●	○		middle: skip on a hard day
025	Retirement Day	●	●		
026	The Other Job	●	○		middle: swap for #001
027	Teaching Someone	●	●		

1.3 · Music, Radio & Pictures

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
028	What Was on the Radio	●	●	●	
029	The First Record You Bought	●	●		
030	Sing the Line	●	●	●	
031	Saturday at the Pictures	●	●		
032	The Star You Loved	●	●		
033	Dance	●	●	●	seated, or with support
034	The Wireless	●	●		
035	The News You Remember	●	○		middle: swap for #028
036	Whistle It	●	●	●	
037	Instruments	●	●		
038	The Song for Your Wedding	●	●	●	
039	Loud or Soft	●	●	●	
040	Make the Playlist	●	●		

1.4 · Food & Cooking

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
041	What Was Always in the Cupboard	●	●		
042	Who Cooked	●	●		
043	The Recipe You Know by Heart	●	●		
044	Sunday Dinner	●	●		

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
045	Rationing and Making Do	●	○		middle: swap for #041
046	The Sweet Shop	●	●		small pieces: not at late stage
047	Eating Out	●	●		
048	The Garden	●	●		
049	Tea, Properly	●	●		hot drink: lukewarm only, never at late stage
050	Feeding a Crowd	●	○		middle: swap for #043

1.5 · Places & Journeys

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
051	The Furthest You Ever Went	●	●		
052	The Seaside	●	●	●	
053	The Street You Lived On Longest	●	●		
054	Moving House	●	○		middle: skip on a hard day
055	Going by Train	●	●		
056	A Place You'd Go Back To	●	●		
057	The Local	●	●		
058	Weather They Remember	●	●		
059	The Journey You Did Every Week	●	●		
060	Somewhere You Never Went	●	●		

1.6 · Seasons & Celebrations

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
061	Christmas When You Were Small	●	●		
062	Birthdays	●	●		
063	Getting Married	●	●		
064	New Year	●	●		
065	Summer Holidays as a Child	●	●		

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
066	First Snow	●	●		ice: supervise closely; not at late stage
067	Harvest and Hard Work	●	○		middle: swap for #058
068	Sunday Best	●	●		
069	The Card You Kept	●	●	●	
070	What You'd Do Again	●	●		

2.1 · Word Fluency & Categories

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
071	Category Chain	●	●		
072	Things That Are Round	●	●		
073	A to Z of Names	●	●		
074	Opposites	●	●		
075	Finish the Saying	●	●		
076	Words Inside a Word	●	○		middle: swap for #075
077	Name the Colour	●	●		
078	Jobs People Do	●	●		
079	Rhyme Time	●	●		
080	Twenty Questions	●	○		middle: swap for #077
081	Kitchen Table	●	●	●	
082	Animals, Two Ways	●	●		
083	Shopping List	●	●		
084	What's It Made Of	●	●		
085	Countries and Capitals	●	○		middle: swap for #051
086	Word Association	●	●		
087	Describe It Without the Word	●	○		middle: swap for #084
088	Things You'd Take	●	●		

2.2 · Visual & Working Memory

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
089	What's Missing	●	●		
090	Odd One Out	●	●		
091	Spot the Difference	●	●		
092	Match the Pairs	●	●		
093	Sort the Photographs	●	●	●	
094	Where Did I Put It	●	●		
095	Faces and Names	●	●		
096	Finish the Picture	●	●		
097	The Tray Story	●	●		
098	Colour Sort	●	●		small pieces: not at late stage
099	Which Came First	●	●		
100	Hidden Objects	●	●		
101	Big Jigsaw	●	●		
102	Draw From Memory	●	●		
103	Same or Different	●	●		
104	Object Feel	●	●	●	

2.3 · Numbers & Everyday Maths

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
105	What Does It Cost	●	●		
106	Count Backwards	●	●		
107	Coins on the Table	●	●		small pieces: not at late stage
108	The Recipe Doubled	●	○		middle: swap for #043
109	Dates That Matter	●	●		
110	Dominoes	●	●		small pieces: not at late stage
111	The Darts Board	●	●		

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
112	How Many	●	●		small pieces: not at late stage
113	Bus Timetable	●	○		middle: swap for #059
114	Playing Cards, Simply	●	●		
115	The Calendar	●	●		
116	Weights and Measures	●	●		

2.4 · Sequences & Logic

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
117	Put It in Order	●	●		
118	What Comes Next	●	●		
119	Steps of a Job	●	●		
120	If This, Then That	●	●		
121	Sort by Size	●	●		
122	The Riddle	●	○		middle: swap for #075
123	Days of the Week	●	●		
124	Sorting the Laundry	●	●	●	
125	Which Doesn't Belong, and Why	●	●		
126	Build the Tower	●	●	●	large blocks or cups only
127	Alphabetical Order	●	○		middle: swap for #123
128	Plan the Day	●	●		
129	The Story Out of Order	●	●		
130	Set the Table	●	●	●	unbreakable crockery, no knives

2.5 · Orientation & Current Life

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
131	Today's Board	●	●	●	
132	Look Out the Window	●	●	●	

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
133	What's in the News	•	•		
134	The Seasons Table	•	•	•	
135	Who's Who Here	•	•		
136	The Clock	•	•	•	
137	What's for Lunch	•	•		
138	The Birthday List	•	•		
139	This Time Last Year	•	•		
140	What's Next This Week	•	•		

2.6 · Attention & Speed

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
141	Clap When You Hear It	•	•		
142	Beat the Clock	•	•		
143	Pass the Object	•	•	•	
144	Simon Says, Seated	•	•		
145	Count the Sounds	•	•	•	
146	The Colour Game	•	•		
147	Follow the Line	•	•		
148	Alternating Lists	•	•		
149	Catch and Name	•	•	•	
150	The Two-Minute Warning	•	•		

3.1 · Seated Warm-Up

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
151	Sit Tall	•	•	•	
152	Look Left, Look Right	•	•	•	
153	Ear to Shoulder	•	•		

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
154	Shoulder Rolls	•	•	•	
155	Side Reach	•	•		
156	Ankle Circles	•	•	•	
157	Wake Up the Hands	•	•	•	
158	Warm the Palms	•	•	•	
159	Wake Up the Feet	•	•		
160	Big Breath to Begin	•	•	•	
161	Wrist Circles	•	•		
162	Name the Body	•	•	•	

3.2 · Arms, Shoulders & Hands

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
163	Reach Forward	•	•	•	
164	Open the Wings	•	•		
165	Hands to Shoulders	•	•	•	
166	Press the Palms	•	•	•	
167	Cross the Body	•	•		
168	Shrug It Off	•	•	•	
169	Open and Close	•	•	•	
170	Finger to Thumb	•	•		
171	Wrist Turns	•	•		
172	The Boxer	•	•	•	
173	Climb the Ladder	•	•	•	
174	Elbow Bends	•	•		
175	Draw in the Air	•	•		
176	Wring the Cloth	•	•	•	
177	Clap and Tap	•	•		

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
178	Shake It Out	•	•	•	

3.3 · Legs & Ankles, Seated

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
179	Seated March	•	•	•	
180	Heel Lifts	•	•	•	
181	Toe Lifts	•	•	•	
182	Knee Extensions	•	•		
183	Marching with Arms	•	•		
184	Heel Slides	•	•		
185	Ankle Pumps	•	•	•	
186	Cushion Squeeze	•	•	•	
187	Knee Lifts with a Count	•	•		
188	Draw with the Foot	•	•		
189	Tap the Beat	•	•	•	
190	One Leg at a Time	•	•		
191	Feet Apart, Feet Together	•	•		
192	The Long March	•	•		
193	Press the Floor	•	•	•	
194	Legs Awake, Head Calm	•	•		

3.4 · Standing Balance, With Support

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
195	Stand and Hold	•	•		standing: only with the care plan's OK; not at late stage
196	Heel Raises, Standing	•	•		standing: only with the care plan's OK; not at late stage

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
197	Side Leg Lifts	•	•		standing: only with the care plan's OK; not at late stage
198	Weight Shifts	•	•		standing: only with the care plan's OK; not at late stage
199	Sit to Stand	•	•		standing: only with the care plan's OK; not at late stage
200	Marching on the Spot	•	•		standing: only with the care plan's OK; not at late stage
201	Toe Taps Forward	•	•		standing: only with the care plan's OK; not at late stage
202	Feet Together	•	•		standing: only with the care plan's OK; not at late stage
203	Knee Lifts, Standing	•	•		standing: only with the care plan's OK; not at late stage
204	Step Back and Return	•	•		standing: only with the care plan's OK; not at late stage
205	Stand and Reach	•	•		standing: only with the care plan's OK; not at late stage
206	Sit Down Slowly	•	•		standing: only with the care plan's OK; not at late stage

3.5 · With An Object

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
207	Balloon Volley	•	•	•	
208	Towel Pull	•	•		
209	Ball Squeeze	•	•	•	
210	Roll the Ball	•	•		
211	Scarf Waves	•	•	•	
212	Pass the Bean Bag	•	•	•	
213	Towel Row	•	•		
214	Balloon Keep-Up, Solo	•	•	•	

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
215	Ball Between the Knees	•	•		
216	Shakers to the Beat	•	•	•	
217	Hand Drum Circle	•	•		
218	Newspaper Scrunch	•	•	•	
219	Push the Ball Across	•	•		
220	Hold and Pass the Warm Thing	•	•	•	

3.6 · Breathing & Winding Down

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
221	Hand on Chest, Hand on Belly	•	•	•	
222	Arms Rise with the Breath	•	•	•	
223	Shoulders Down	•	•	•	
224	Count the Breath	•	•		
225	Warm Hands on the Eyes	•	•	•	
226	The Body Check	•	•	•	
227	Long Sigh	•	•		
228	Feet on the Floor	•	•	•	
229	Stretch and Yawn	•	•		
230	One Good Thing	•	•	•	

4.1 · Hands & Fine Motor

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
231	Sorting the Button Tin	•	•		small pieces: not at late stage
232	Threading Beads	•	•		small pieces: not at late stage
233	Folding Napkins	•	•	•	
234	Clothes Pegs	•	•		
235	Pouring Practice	•	•		small pieces: not at late stage

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
236	Lids and Jars	•	•		
237	Rolling Socks	•	•	•	
238	Buttons and Buttonholes	•	•		small pieces: not at late stage
239	Sorting Cutlery	•	•		
240	Screw and Unscrew	•	•		small pieces: not at late stage
241	Playing Card Shuffle	•	•		
242	Winding Wool	•	•	•	
243	Tearing and Sticking	•	•	•	tearing only, no glue
244	Sorting Coins	•	•		small pieces: not at late stage
245	Lacing Cards	•	•		
246	Hand Massage	•	•	•	

4.2 · The Senses

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
247	Scent Jars	•	•	•	
248	The Fabric Basket	•	•	•	
249	Warm and Cool Stones	•	•	•	palm-sized stones only
250	Crushing Herbs	•	•	•	hold the herb near them; nothing in the mouth
251	Tasting Board	•	•		food: check swallowing needs first; not at late stage
252	The Sound Bag	•	•	•	
253	Look at This	•	•	•	
254	Hot Drink, Cold Drink	•	•		hot drink: lukewarm only, never at late stage
255	The Weighted Blanket Moment	•	•	•	
256	Which Hand	•	•		
257	Smell of the Season	•	•	•	

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
258	Texture Match	•	•		
259	Water Play	•	•	•	
260	Something Beautiful	•	•	•	

4.3 · Music & Rhythm

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
261	Hand Drum on the Lap	•	•	•	
262	Shakers to the Beat	•	•	•	
263	Listening Together	•	•	•	
264	Clapping Circle	•	•	•	
265	Scarf Dancing	•	•	•	
266	Name That Tune	•	•		
267	Sing the Chorus	•	•	•	
268	Fast and Slow	•	•	•	
269	The Request Show	•	•		
270	Drum the Name	•	•	•	
271	Music While We Work	•	•	•	
272	Conducting	•	•		
273	Tap the Table	•	•	•	
274	One Song to End	•	•	•	

4.4 · One-Session Crafts

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
275	Pressing Flowers	•	•		
276	Painting a Pot	•	•		
277	Paper Garland	•	•		
278	Stamping Cards	•	•		

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
279	Card Weaving	•	•		
280	Collage from Magazines	•	•		
281	Decorating a Box	•	•		
282	Salt Dough Shapes	•	•		
283	Making a Bookmark	•	•		
284	Sorting and Sticking Buttons	•	•		small pieces: not at late stage
285	Wrapping a Parcel	•	•		
286	Colouring, Properly	•	•		
287	Making Lavender Bags	•	•		
288	Photo Frame	•	•		
289	Sewing a Button On	•	•		needle: not at late stage
290	Making a Card for Someone	•	•		

4.5 · Nature On The Table

#	ACTIVITY	EARLY	MIDDLE	LATE	NOTE
291	Planting Bulbs	•	•		
292	Arranging Flowers	•	•	•	
293	Sorting the Leaves	•	•		small pieces: not at late stage
294	Potting On	•	•		
295	Herbs on the Windowsill	•	•	•	
296	Bird Feeder	•	•		seeds and lard: not at late stage
297	Pressing and Framing	•	•		
298	Watering Round	•	•		
299	The Nature Tray	•	•	•	
300	Sit Outside	•	•	•	



PART 3 · WHAT TO SAY: THE MOMENTS THAT ARE SPECIFIC TO DEMENTIA

Each moment has the same shape: what to do → what to say → what NOT to say. Say the words slowly, warmly, and one sentence at a time. Wait longer than feels natural before you say the next one.

🔑 **Three things that underlie every script below.**
1 · Feelings outlast facts. They may not remember what happened ten minutes ago, but they remember how it made them feel. Protect the feeling.
2 · Their reality is the one in the room. Correcting it rarely works, and it often turns a hard moment into a distressing one.
3 · You are not lying when you choose kindness over accuracy. You are choosing which true thing to say.

1 · They refuse: "No." "I'm not doing that." "Leave me alone."

Do: accept the no straight away. Sit nearby and start the activity yourself, quietly, within their sight. Many people with dementia say no to a *question* but join an *activity* that is already happening. Try again in ten minutes, or tomorrow.

Say:

- *"That's alright. I'll just be here doing this."*
- (a few minutes later) *"Could you hold this for me for a second?"*
- *"I could really use a second pair of hands."*

Don't say: *"Come on, everybody else is doing it."* · *"You loved this last week."* · *"It's good for you."* Each of these turns a choice into a contest, and they will win it.

📌 **Try a different door:** the same activity offered as a *job* ("Could you help me fold these?") is often accepted when the same activity offered as an *activity* is not.

2 · They ask the same question again and again

"What time is lunch?" "Where's my husband?" "When are we going?"

Do: answer it as if it were the first time, every time. The question is usually a feeling looking for reassurance: worry, hunger, wanting to know someone is coming. Answer the feeling, and then give them something to do with their hands.

Say:

- *"Lunch is at twelve. I'll make sure you don't miss it."*
- *"You're wondering where he is. Tell me about him. How did you two meet?"*
- *"We're staying right here for now. I'm with you."*
- Write the answer on a card in large letters and put it where they can see it: **LUNCH IS AT 12. YOU ARE SAFE HERE.** Then point to it, gently, next time.

Don't say: *"I've already told you."* · *"You asked me that five minutes ago."* · *"Don't you remember?"* They cannot remember, and the reminder only adds embarrassment to the worry.

3 · "I want to go home."

Often said by someone who is at home.

Do: don't argue about where they are. "Home" often means a feeling: safe, useful, with their people, in the place where they knew what to do. Respond to that feeling. Walk with them if they want to walk. Then bring them gently into something familiar.

Say:

- *"You're thinking about home. Tell me about it. What was your front door like?"*
- *"Who was at home waiting for you?"*
- *"It's getting late to go now. Let's have a cup of tea first, and you can tell me about it."*
- Then use **#002 The House You Grew Up In** (kitchen only), **#124 Sorting the Laundry** or **#233 Folding Napkins**: familiar work from the home they mean.

Don't say: *"You are home."* · *"You live here now."* · *"Your mother died years ago."* Even when it is true, it is news they hear for the first time, every time.

⚠️ **If they are determined to leave and it isn't safe**, keep your voice light, walk with them, and follow your facility's procedure or your own safety plan at home. Never block a doorway or hold an arm unless they are in immediate danger.

4 · Late-afternoon restlessness (often called "sundowning")

Pacing, fidgeting, more confusion, anxiety or tearfulness as the light fades.

Do: plan for it rather than react to it. Put your **calmest, most familiar** activity in the late afternoon. Turn the lights on before it gets dark, close curtains on reflections in the windows, turn down the TV and the noise. Keep the group small, or go one-to-one.

Best activities for this time of day: #263 Listening Together · #242 Winding Wool · #233 Folding Napkins · #249 Warm and Cool Stones · #220 Hold and Pass the Warm Thing · #255 The Weighted Blanket Moment · #246 Hand Massage · #274 One Song to End

Say:

- *"It's getting dark. Let's put the lights on and get cosy."*
- *"Would you help me with these? I can't do them on my own."*
- *"I'm staying right here with you."*

Don't say: *"Sit down."* · *"Calm down."* · *"There's nothing to worry about."* Being told to calm down rarely calms anyone. Doing something calm, next to them, often does.

📌 **Tell the care team or doctor** if late-afternoon restlessness is new or getting worse. Pain, hunger, thirst, tiredness, constipation or an infection can all show up this way.

5 · They don't recognise you, or someone they love

"Who are you?" "That's not my daughter." Calling you by a parent's or sibling's name.

Do: introduce yourself, every time, without making it a test. If they call you by someone else's name, it often means you remind them of someone who made them feel safe. That is a compliment, not a mistake to fix.

Say:

- *"Hello, Dorothy. It's Anne. I've come to sit with you for a while."*
- (when they use another name) *"Tell me about her. What was she like?"*
- For family members: *"I'm Susan. I'm the one who always brings the shortbread."* (a detail they may know, rather than a relationship they may not)

Don't say: *"You know who I am."* · *"I'm your daughter!"* · *"Guess who I am."* A quiz they can't pass, about someone they love, is one of the most distressing things you can ask of them.

📌 **For family:** this moment usually hurts you more than it hurts them. It is the illness, not the relationship. If you need to step out for a minute, step out.

6 · They accuse someone, or become suspicious

"Someone has stolen my purse." "You've moved my things." "They're talking about me."

Do: take the feeling seriously, even when the accusation is not true. Losing things is frightening, and blaming someone is a way of making sense of it. Don't defend yourself; help them look. Keep a spare of the things that go missing most (a cheap purse, a pair of glasses) so the search can end well.

Say:

- *"That's horrible, losing something that's yours. Let's look together."*

- *"You're right to want to find it. Where do you usually keep it?"*
- (once it's found) *"Here it is. I'm so glad."* Then move on, without explaining where it was.

Don't say: *"Nobody stole anything."* · *"You put it there yourself."* · *"Why would I take your purse?"* Arguing makes you the thief in their eyes.

⚠️ **If a suspicion could be real** (money genuinely missing, a bruise nobody explains), take it seriously and report it. Not every accusation is the illness.

7 · They get frustrated with the instructions

Pushing the sheet away, "I don't understand", "This is stupid", tears.

Do: stop explaining. Instructions are usually the problem, not the activity. Show the first step with your own hands, side by side, and say nothing. Then hand over one piece. If it still isn't working, change the activity to one from the next stage down on the map, without announcing it.

Say:

- *"Let me show you. Like this."* (then silence, and your hands doing it)
- *"Your turn. Just this one."*
- *"That's how I do it too."*
- *"Let's leave that. Would you help me with this instead?"*

Don't say: *"It's easy."* · *"Just try."* · *"No, not like that."* · *"Watch carefully."* "It's easy" tells someone who is struggling that the problem is them.

📌 **The rule for every activity at middle stage and below:** one instruction, then one action. Never two instructions in a row.



PART 4 · TWENTY-FOUR ONE-STEP SENSORY VERSIONS FOR LATE STAGE

Each one takes an activity you already own and reduces it to a single action and a single sense. No questions, no right answers, no finished product. Do it with them, not to them. Watch their face, not the clock. Three to ten minutes is a complete session.

#	FROM THE KIT	THE ONE STEP	THE SENSE
1	**#015 Hands**	Warm a little hand cream between your palms, then hold their hand in both of yours.	touch, warmth
2	**#246 Hand Massage**	Stroke slowly from wrist to fingertips, one finger at a time. Nothing else.	touch
3	**#158 Warm the Palms**	Rub your palms together, then rest them over theirs.	warmth
4	**#220 Hold and Pass the Warm Thing**	Place a warm (not hot) wheat bag in their lap and rest their hands on it.	warmth, weight
5	**#255 The Weighted Blanket Moment**	Lay a folded blanket across their lap and sit beside them.	deep pressure
6	**#249 Warm and Cool Stones**	Place one warm, palm-sized stone in their hand. Later, a cool one.	temperature, weight
7	**#259 Water Play**	Lower their hands into a bowl of warm water, and rest yours there too.	warmth, touch
8	**#248 The Fabric Basket**	Put one soft fabric square in their hands. Then a different texture.	texture

#	FROM THE KIT	THE ONE STEP	THE SENSE
9	**#012 What You Wore**	Lay one piece of fabric from their era across their knees.	texture, memory
10	**#124 Sorting the Laundry**	Hand them one warm towel, straight from the dryer, to hold or fold.	warmth, familiar motion
11	**#233 Folding Napkins**	Hand them one cloth napkin. Whatever they do with it is right.	familiar motion
12	**#242 Winding Wool**	Hold the ball of wool in their hands while you do the winding.	rhythm, touch
13	**#209 Ball Squeeze**	Place one soft ball in their palm and close your hand gently over theirs.	touch, grip
14	**#207 Balloon Volley**	Float one balloon gently towards their hands. One push back is a rally.	movement, colour
15	**#211 Scarf Waves**	Drape one light, bright scarf over their hand and move it slowly with music.	colour, movement
16	**#247 Scent Jars**	Open one jar (lavender, orange or coffee) near them. Close it. Wait.	smell
17	**#250 Crushing Herbs**	Crush one sprig of rosemary or mint in your fingers and hold it near them.	smell
18	**#257 Smell of the Season**	One seasonal smell: pine, orange peel, cinnamon. Just the smell.	smell, orientation
19	**#028 What Was on the Radio**	Play one song from when they were about twenty. No question.	hearing, memory
20	**#030 Sing the Line**	Sing the first line of a song they know and leave a gap.	hearing, voice
21	**#261 Hand Drum on the Lap**	Tap a slow, steady beat on a drum on their lap. Pause. See if they tap.	rhythm
22	**#263 Listening Together**	Sit side by side and listen to one piece of music. Say nothing.	hearing, company
23	**#260 Something Beautiful**	Hold a single flower where they can see it, and let them touch it.	sight, touch
24	**#300 Sit Outside**	Take them to a door or window with fresh air and daylight, and sit together.	air, light, sound

📌 **Late stage, in one sentence:** the activity is the attention you give them. The object is just a reason to sit close.

⚠️ Check temperatures on your own wrist first. No essential oils on skin, nothing in the mouth, and stop at the first sign of discomfort.



PART 5 · WHEN TO STOP, AND HOW TO FINISH WELL

The signs it's time to stop

Stop, or switch to something calmer, when you see any of these. They are often the only way someone with dementia can tell you "enough":

WHAT YOU SEE	WHAT IT OFTEN MEANS
Rubbing hands, picking at clothes, fiddling that speeds up	rising anxiety
Trying to stand again and again, or looking for the door	wants out of the situation
Face tightening, frowning, jaw set	discomfort, pain or frustration
Going suddenly quiet, staring, eyes closing	tired, overloaded
Pushing materials away, or hitting at them	too hard, too much, or finished
Tears, calling out, a raised voice	distress, act now
Grimacing or holding part of the body	possible pain; stop and tell the care team

📌 **Stop sooner than you think.** Ending five minutes early, while it is still going well, is always better than ending five minutes late, after it has gone wrong.

How to finish without it feeling like a failure

1 · End on something they can do. Before you stop, hand them the easiest possible last step: put the last card in the box, the last sock in the basket, the last bead on the string. The activity ends with a success, not an interruption.

2 · Thank them for helping. Not "well done", which can sound like a teacher, but *"Thank you, I couldn't have done that without you."* Being useful matters at every stage.

3 · Use the same ending every time. #274 One Song to End, #225 Warm Hands on the Eyes or **#178 Shake It Out**. Repeated often enough, the ending itself tells them the activity is over, even when they can't remember what the activity was.

4 · Never explain why you're stopping. Not *"we'll stop because you're tired"* or *"this is too hard for you today"*. Just *"That's lovely. Let's have a cup of tea now."*

5 · Leave something behind. The folded napkins on the table, the flower in a glass, the card they stamped. Something they can see later, even without remembering making it.

After the session

- **Write one line down:** what worked, what didn't, and the time of day. Over a few weeks, this becomes the most useful page you own: a map of the person, not just the stage.
- **Tell the care team or family** anything new: a new word, a refusal that wasn't there before, a sudden change in ability.
- **Look after yourself.** Caring for someone living with dementia is some of the hardest work there is. A session that didn't go well is not a verdict on you.

THE ONE-PAGE CARD (cut out and keep with your supplies)

PICK TODAY'S STAGE: open question → choice of two → something in their hands. When in doubt, go one lower.

ONE instruction, then **ONE** action. Show it, don't explain it.

ANSWER THE FEELING, not the facts. Never "don't you remember?"

"I WANT TO GO HOME": *"Tell me about home."* Then familiar work.

STOP at the first signs of "enough". End on something they can do.

TELL THE CARE TEAM about anything sudden or new.