

Elder Companion: Lesson 8—Leisure Activities¹

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Introduction

The [Elder Companion training program](#) is designed to train persons interested in becoming employed by local service providers as sitter/companions for the elderly. The objective of the program is to help participants develop the necessary skills to provide high-quality care including assistance with daily living activities (DLAs), home management services and companionship for the elderly adult.

This training course is preparatory to studying to become a certified nursing assistant (CNA).

For an overview of the training course, see [FCS5246/FY586](#).

In the Elder Companion training program, the following topics are addressed:

- Lesson 1 Roles and Responsibilities
- Lesson 2 Aging
- Lesson 3 Communication
- Lesson 4 Nutrition
- Lesson 5 Home Maintenance and Safety
- Lesson 6 Stress Management
- Lesson 7 Time Management
- Lesson 8 Leisure Activities
- Lesson 9 Getting a Job

In addition to the nine topics that are taught as Lessons 1 through 9 in a classroom setting, training program participants will be required to make a field observation at an elder care facility. An Agent's guide and observation form are provided in Attachment 1. (See training course overview [FCS5246](#).)

Agent's Teaching Guide: Leisure Activities

Part 1: Why Leisure Activities?

Part 2: Possible Activities for My Client

Part 3: Exercises for Older Adults

Time: 1–1½ Hours

Equipment/Supplies: PC/laptop (or alternative method to display slides); PowerPoint slides created from Handouts A through D

Instructor: County faculty and/or Recreation staff member

Background Information

Leisure and Recreation

Handouts:

Part 1

- Handout A: Purposes of Recreational Activities
- Handout B: Physical Activities
- Handout C: Social Activities
- Handout D: Mental Activities

Part 2

- Handout E: List of Possible Activities

Part 3

- Exercises for Older Adults

Objectives (Expected Outcomes)

Participants will be able to:

- understand the purposes of leisure recreational activities,
- list the four kinds of recreation and leisure activities and examples of each,
- understand the need to adapt activities to individuals, and
- demonstrate exercises for older adults.

Part 1: Why Leisure Activities?

Lesson Plan

Introduction

Leisure activities are important to the well-being of everyone at any age. It is especially important for your elderly clients.

DO:

Use the background information to discuss the emotional benefits provided by leisure activities.

Show slide created from Handout A, *Purposes of Leisure Activities*, and distribute the handout. Ask the participants why they participate in leisure activities. Make a list on the whiteboard.

Show slides for the three types of activities created from Handouts B, *Physical Activities*; C, *Social Activities*; and D, *Mental Activities*.

Have the participants divide into three groups: physical, social, and mental. Have them list as many activities as they can think of that fall under their heading. Have each group share their listing with the group.

Talk about how each type of activity helps the individual.

REFLECT:

Why do we engage in leisure and recreational activities?

What are some of the benefits to the person?

APPLY:

How will you use this information in your work with your elder?

Handout A: Purposes of Recreational Activities

- to offset empty hours, monotony, and boredom
- to develop a feeling of usefulness, belonging, and self-confidence
- to renew and refresh physical strength
- to stimulate social relationships
- to improve personal enjoyment and satisfaction
- to encourage creative, inventive, and expressive feelings and talents

Handout B: Physical Activities

Physical activities are good for our bodies and our minds. Some examples of such activities are

- walking
- slow stretching

- dancing
- horseshoes

Handout C: Social Activities

Social activities are a good way to meet new friends and stay close to others. This, in turn, may help older persons feel more a part of the world around them and help their feelings of self-esteem. Some social activities are

- talking on the phone
- visiting with friends and family
- eating meals with others
- attending family events or parties

Handout D: Mental Activities

Mental activities help stimulate our minds. Some examples:

- reading/listening to audiobooks or podcasts
- games
- hobbies and crafts
- crossword puzzles

Part 2: Possible Activities for Older Adults

Introduction

As a companion, there will be times when you will encourage and take part in recreation activities with your clients. As you know, all older people are not alike and what works with one may not work with another. Get to know your client better to understand their limitations. Find out what she/he enjoys doing and is able to do. People must always be given the chance to express themselves about their likes and dislikes, strengths and weaknesses, interests, needs, and limitations.

DO:

Using the same groups from the previous activity, have the participants determine which of the activities are appropriate for their elder companion. Discuss their choices and use Handout E, *List of Possible Activities*, for them to supplement their list.

REFLECT:

Which of these activities do you know how to do?

APPLY:

Make Activity Kits for them to use with their elders. Let different people lead the rest of the group in participating in some of the activities.

Handout E: List of Possible Activities

The following alphabetical list of activities is partial and should be used to stimulate your own thinking. Do not use

as a checklist. Do not use the list to ask clients which activities they wish to do.

- Auto rides
- Bird feeding
- Bird watching & walks
- Cards
- Checkers
- Chinese checkers
- Coffee breaks
- Collecting (stamps, coins, rocks, etc.)
- Conversation
- Crocheting
- Crossword puzzles
- Exercises
- Hearts
- Dominoes
- Knitting
- Labeling family pictures
- Letter writing
- Library
- Making family photo albums
- Movies or videos
- Music
- Newspaper clippings
- Puzzles
- Reading
- Rummy
- Scrabble
- Solitaire
- Spectator sports
- Story telling
- Tatting
- Television (watching, playing television game shows, etc.)
- Toy making (cloth, wood, etc.)
- Walking
- Writing (newsletter, blog, letters, local paper, poetry, etc.)

Adapted from Adult Sitter Clinic Workbook, 2nd edition, by Diane Smathers, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Georgia, Athens, 1983.

Part 3: Exercise for Older Adults: Lesson Plan

Everyone needs physical stimulation to keep them physically and emotionally fit. The elderly are no different. Many elderly clients have physical limitations that keep them from engaging in extensive physical activity. However, there are certain exercises that they can do. Today, we are going to learn to do some of them.

DO:

- Distribute Handout F, *Exercises for Older Adults*. Divide the participants into pairs for practicing the

exercises. Assign one of the exercises to each pair. Have one person read the instructions while the other person does the exercise. Then reverse the roles so each gets to practice.

- Have each pair demonstrate their exercise to the group. As they demonstrate, everyone practices the exercise.

REFLECT:

- Why would you try to do these exercises with your elderly clients?
- Do you feel comfortable doing these exercises with other people?

APPLY:

- Practice these exercises until you can do them without looking at the notes/illustrations.

Handout F: Exercises for Older Adults

The following exercises are adapted from "PEP Up Your Life" from American Association of Retired Persons. They have been reviewed by Leigh Ann Martin, Exercise Physiologist, and are offered here for use in work with older clients.

Shoulder Shrugs: for the upper back, to tone shoulders and relax the muscles at the base of the neck.

Steps: In a sitting or standing position, start with your arms resting at your sides, raise your shoulders toward your ears, hold this position for a 3 second count, and slowly lower your shoulders to the beginning position.

Suggested repetition: 8–12 times.

Arm Circles: to strengthen shoulders and upper back.

Steps: Sit or stand erect with your arms extended to the side, elbows straight, head facing forward. Rotate arms from the shoulder in small circles.

Suggested repetition: 10 forward circles, 10 backward circles.

Arm Curls: to strengthen arm muscles.

Steps: Use a weighted object such as a book or a can of vegetables (start with no more than 5 pounds). Stand or sit erect with arms at sides, palms facing forward, and holding weighted object. Bend your arms toward your shoulder, hold for one second at the top of the motion, and slowly lower to starting position.

Suggested repetition: 8–12 times.

Quarter Squat: to tone and strengthen lower leg muscles.

Steps: Stand erect behind a chair, hands on chair back for balance, feet shoulder width apart. Bend knees slowly, do not let your knees go past your toes, hold in the lowered position for 1–3 seconds, and slowly rise to a normal standing position.

Suggested repetition: 8–12 times.

Heel Raises: to strengthen the calf muscles and ankles.

Steps: Stand erect, hands on hips, or on a chair back for extra balance, and feet shoulder width apart. Slowly raise body on toes. Lower slowly to starting position.

Suggested repetition: 8–12 times.

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