

Using apps to create engagement and enjoyment

practical ideas to help you support a person living with dementia



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Using apps for the engagement and enjoyment of people living with dementia

There are many potential benefits in the use of a tablet device (such as an iPad) to create engagement and enjoyment with, and for, a person living with dementia. A tablet device can provide easy access to play games, reminisce, listen to music or be artistic. It can be used to assist relaxation; and assist family carers and health professionals to respond to a person with behavioural and psychological changes. The tablet device has the advantage of being mobile so can be used anywhere (e.g., doctor's office).

Tablet devices can potentially be used to help people with dementia by improving their quality of life and the range of opportunities for meaningful occupations. However, it is important to focus on the individual's needs, interests, and capabilities when choosing Apps.

Older people may feel overwhelmed by new technology, so it is worthwhile to introduce a tablet device in a positive way. People with mild dementia can potentially work towards using a tablet device independently. Those with mild to moderate dementia may require assistance with set up and to solve any problems that they encounter during use. People with severe dementia will require one to one support to engage with the tablet.

For a person who can work toward using the tablet device independently (a person at the mild to moderate stage of the condition), aim to facilitate a daily session.

Don't load too many Apps at once. Give the person time to feel more confident and able to use the introductory Apps.

Stage One

Use either the App called **Pixel Swarm** or **Swirlicity lite** and ask the person to touch the screen with their finger. The screen explodes into bright multicoloured lights that respond to touch. Then ask the person to run their fingers over the screen and the lights follow their movements. Then ask the person to tap their fingers on the screen to create more lights and more movement. Part of the purpose of this stage is to help the person become more familiar with the basic finger gestures to operate the tablet.

Stage Two

Introduce either the App called **Drawing Pad** or **Doodle Buddy** and demonstrate how to select the paint brushes, pencils etc. and different colours. Encourage the person to

experiment for 10-15 minutes. Stay with the person and give guidance if needed but do not touch the screen. Ensure that the person does not become frustrated. Monitor the person's sense of wellbeing and enjoyment.

Stage Three

Introduce the App called **Doodle Jump**. Doodle Jump is a basic platform style video game that requires the player to help a character climb to different levels by moving the tablet. Again, encourage the person to have a go at the game for 10-15 minutes and get used to the movement required. Remain with the person to give guidance but do not touch the screen, and again, ensure they do not become frustrated.

These activities will have prepared them for the various activities required when using a device. From here you may want to consider downloading some Apps that may be of particular interest to the person.

Tablets can be successfully used by people with a diagnosis of dementia. The aim would be to use these products to enable instant interaction, provide enjoyment and open up new ways of communicating.

Face time and Skype have also been useful for enabling people to connect with family and friends. Tablets can also be useful in maintaining fine motor skills, provide memory stimulation through reminiscence and improve cognitive function, increase communication and interaction and develop interests in new and old hobbies.

Worcester University in the UK has conducted touchscreen research trials using the iPad with people with a diagnosis of dementia and found they can have a positive impact on improving the person's quality of life (Upton, et al, 2011).

Which app should I try?

There are hundreds of applications (Apps), many of which have been designed specifically for people with a diagnosis of dementia and others that are suitable for their use. The following pages provide a summary of apps that you may wish to try, many of which are free. Some will be more appropriate in certain stages of the disease. Most are available on Android and iPad tablets; all are available through the Play Store or iTunes Apps stores.

The Apps listed have been sorted by category, have a brief description and are "rated" for use throughout the progression of dementia. Use the key below to help interpret the summary of apps which follows.

Key	
Mild	Mild or early progression of dementia
Mod	Moderate progression of the condition and function
Late	Severe or later progression of the condition
All	May be suitable for mild, moderate to later progressions of dementia
A	Can be used on an Android tablet device
I	Can be used on an iPad device

DBMAS has trialled all of the Apps listed but does not endorse any particular app. This resource is a guide only to help care givers and people with dementia with ideas for apps to try.

Please note: using a light emitting screen (e.g., from tablets, smartphones, and eReaders) one hour before going to bed has been associated with disruptions to sleep patterns (Chang A et al, 2015). It is recommended therefore, to avoid using apps at least an hour before going to bed. The light from the screen may make it harder for the person to fall asleep by delaying the production of melatonin, a sleep enhancing hormone, and may also have an effect on alertness the next morning.

The following section is divided into the following categories:

- Enjoyment/sensory apps (includes music, art and reminiscence)
- Memory and focus apps
- Relaxation apps
- Wandering/tracking/GPS apps
- Caregiving apps
- Dementia information and resources

Summary of apps				
Name of app	Cost	Description	Progression of dementia	Type of device
Enjoyment/sensory apps (includes music, art & reminiscence)				
Pixel Swarm	cost	Create starburst patterns by touching the screen & moving their finger.	All	A/I
Swirlcity lite	free	Like Pixel Swarm, create patterns & effects by touching the screen & utilizing multiple modes.	All	I
Drawing Pad	cost	Draw or paint as if on canvas or in a sketch book.	All	I
Art Flow Tablet Sketchbook	free	Drawing/Art App specifically for Android tablets.	All	A
Doodle Buddy	free	Paint, draw, stamp, scribble & play <i>Naughts & Crosses</i>	All	A/I
Doodle Jump	free	A basic platform style video game, the player helps a character climb to different levels by moving the tablet.	Mild Mod	A/I
YouTube	free	Enormous collection of short videos which can be easily searched for & played. Everything from film clips to old news reels to pieces of music can be found on YouTube & this allows participants to request what they would like to see. YouTube could be used in reminiscence sessions.	All	A/I
iFish Pond	cost	A good choice for people who enjoy/ed fishing, with realistic water sounds every time the screen is touched. Opportunity to go "virtual" fishing with a rod or just arrange the pond & wildlife.	Mild Mod	I
Pocket Pond 2	free	Enjoy feeding the koi & decorating a pond.	All	A/I
Talking Tom Cat Talking Pierre Talking Ben	free	Pet cat, dog & parrot responds to touch & repeats what you say; silly & fun!	All	A/I

Summary of apps (continued)				
Name of app	Cost	Description	Progression of dementia	Type of device
Flow Free	free	Puzzle game: connect same coloured pipes, levels from easy to complex.	Mild Mod	A/I
Bubble Xplode	free	Pop bubbles via their linked colour groups.	Mild Mod	A/I
Rail Maze 2	free	Train puzzles focussed on planning & spatial awareness skills.	All	A/I
Simon Says	free	Classic memory game: user first watches buttons light up in sequence, then repeats the sequence in the same order. The sequence grows longer with each completed level.	Mild Mod	A/I
Tablet Journal	cost	All in one diary & planner to capture & organise personal information for day to day activities.	Mild Mod	A/I
Bloom	cost	Create patterns & unique melodies by tapping & touching the screen. A generative music player takes over when Bloom is left idle, creating an infinite selection of compositions & patterns.	All	I
Clicky Sticky Trains	cost	User can build their own trains, place on tracks, choose the scenery & then control them.	Mild Mod	A/I
150 Years of World History	cost	Browse hundreds of images & accompanying information about the last 150 years of world history.	All	I
World History	cost	Explore a time line of history & read facts & information.	All	A
Face Goo	free	Photo app: user can stretch, pinch & twist photos in crazy ways.	Mild Mod	A/I
Fluid	free	Turns the tablet into a liquid surface.	Mod Late	A/I
Keynote (I) Power Point (A)	free	A presentation app to create a digital photo album, good for developing individualised life stories & reminiscence books.	All	A/I

Summary of apps (continued)				
Name of app	Cost	Description	Progression of dementia	Type of device
Lineart	free	Combines art, music & science in a relaxation experience. Use touch to guide & manipulate the flow of music & vision.	Mod Late	I
Melodala	cost	Create unique mandalas, blending colour & effects.	All	I
Pocket Piano	free	Full piano with realistic effects up to ten keys can be played at one time.	All	A/I
Orient Express Dominoes	free	A variant of traditional dominoes set in First Class in exotic locations.	Mild Mod	I
Dominoes	free	Traditional dominoes	Mild Mod	A
Pollock's Toy Theatre	free	Construct your own theatre, choose characters & record & edit their own plays complete with audio.	Mild Mod	I
Word Search Puzzles	free	Standard word puzzles in different themes & levels of difficulty.	Mild Mod	A/I
Cross Word	free	Standard cross word puzzles in different themes & levels of difficulty.	Mild Mod	A/I
Scrabble	free	Familiar classic game for all tablets.	Mild Mod	A/I
Augment	free	Build a 3D object, animal or person. Use knowledge of the person's life to tailor the choice (e.g., Bob, a former pig farmer, could see an image of a pig which looked exactly as though it was there in the room with him).	All	A/I
FlowerGarden	free	Pick virtual seeds, plant, water & watch them grow. This is especially significant for participants who enjoyed growing plants & are missing their former gardens.	All	I
Let's Create! Pottery	Free or cost	Touch the screen to make pottery by throwing clay on a virtual wheel. Create a collection of pots of different shapes & sizes.	Mild Mod	A/I

Summary of apps (continued)				
Name of app	Cost	Description	Progression of dementia	Type of device
Cake Doodle	cost	Bake/decorate a cake, & evoke memories relating to cooking.	Mild Mod	I
Delicious Cake Decoration	free	Bake/decorate a cake, & evoke memories relating to cooking.	Mild Mod	A
Fingerpaint Magic	free	Paint with a rainbow of colors & create swirls.	All	A/I
Labyrinth 2 HD	Free – or cost	A game to exercise the brain with a wide range of mazes. From extremely easy levels to complicated levels with holes, cannons & more.	Mild Mod	A/I
Logos Quiz	free	A remember & recall things game, with over 500 brands to remember & recall.	Mild Mod	A/I
Jigsaw Box	free	Complete over 100 puzzles, determine the level of difficulty—8 to 252 pieces, & create a jigsaw from your own photo file.	Mild Mod	I
Jigsaw Puzzle	free	Complete jigsaws of varying complexity from 4 to 400 pieces.	All	A/I
iBook or eBook readers	free	Opportunity to purchase eBooks & also provides many free classics to download. Text & background can be changed & an audio books option is available from \$3.99	All	A/I
Google Maps & Street View	free	Explore places & cities. A great tool for reminiscence & to encourage story telling.	All	A/I
ABC Radio	free	Access to all ABC radio stations in Australia plus podcasts of favourite shows.	All	A/I
Yesterday USA Old Time Radio	free	Old time American based radio shows from the 1920s to the 1950s.	All	A/I
Virtuoso	free	Play the piano.	All	A/I
Cajonazo	free	Tap the screen to play flamenco rhythm sounds.	All	A/I
Slots Heaven	free	Slot machine game	Mild Mod	A/I

Summary of apps (continued)				
Name of app	Cost	Description	Progression of dementia	Type of device
Memory & Focus apps				
Lumosity	free	Memory & brain performance "workouts".	Mild Mod	A/I
Vismory	cost	Memorize shapes, colours & positions of objects.	Mild Mod	I
Fit Brains Trainer	free	Concentration, memory & problem-solving app	Mild Mod	A/I
Spaced Retrieval Therapy	cost	Practice the memory of names, facts & routines.	Mild Mod	I
Brainy App	free	Brain games for memory & thinking skills.	Mild Mod	I
Brainbean	free	Brain games to improve memory & thinking.	Mild Mod	I
Relaxation apps				
Also try old family photos in a digital frame or use PowerPoint (A) or Key Note (I) for a photo slideshow.				
Getty Images	free	46 million images, searchable by word (such as "sunset"); lovely.	All	I
Zen Garden	cost	Create a beautiful & relaxing space.	Mild Mod	A
Epic Zen Garden	free	Create a beautiful & relaxing space.	Mild Mod	I
Relax	free	Relaxing music & sounds of nature.	All	A/I
Binaural Brain Game Relaxation Therapy	free	A game for relaxation & meditation.	Mild Mod	I
Brain Waves (Binaural Beats)	free	Sounds to assist with meditation & relaxation.	Mild Mod	A
Wandering/tracking/GPS apps				
GPS Tracker	free	Locator for family member when both parties have either an iPhone/iPad with them.	All	I

Summary of apps (continued)				
Name of app	Cost	Description	Progression of dementia	Type of device
Walkmeter GPS Pedometer	free	Includes maps, graphs, laps, zones & training plans.	All	A/I
Caregiving apps				
Dosecast	free	Flexible medication reminder app.	Mild	A/I
Balance for Alzheimer's Caregivers	Free/ cost	Coordinate care/meds, track changes (USA based).	All	I
Dementia information & resources				
BPSD Guide: Managing BPSD for Clinicians	free	Designed to provide guidance for clinicians when caring for people with dementia.	All	A/I
3D Brain	free	Interactive, 3D resource on the brain; shows disorders, functionality.	All	A/I
BEAT-D	free	Environmental assessment App	All	I
Understanding Dementia	free	Help for carers to better understand dementia.	All	I

Chang A, Aeschbach D, Duffy J, Czeisler C. (2015) Evening use of light-emitting eReaders negatively affects sleep, circadian timing, and next-morning alertness. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*. Vol 112, No. 4. 1232-1237.

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