

**Attainment's Mental Fitness**

# *Sharpen* **Your Senses** *Cards*

**Facilitator's  
Guide**



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**Sensory Activities  
to Stimulate the Brain  
and Enhance Memory**

# Welcome to Mental Fitness: Sharpen Your Senses Cards

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Sensory experiences provide information that's vital for our well-being, and are a large part of what makes life enjoyable!

## **Sharpen Your Senses Cards**

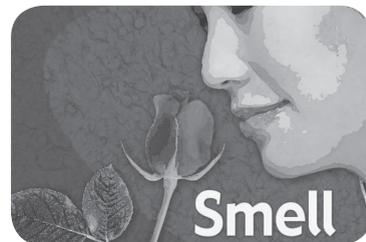
concentrate on each sense individually as well as all of them combined. Our five senses—vision, hearing, taste, touch, and smell—all have the ability to stimulate our brain, enhance memory, and help us interpret the world around us.

These cards are great to use with large and small adult groups of all ages, or for individuals seeking to enhance their mental fitness. Many of the cards are also appropriate for children. If they're used in a group setting like a senior center, assisted living residence, or adult day program, group facilitators may find the following suggestions useful.

Each card asks the player a specific question. However, most cards also lend themselves to follow-up questions and group discussions. These activities have the potential to further enhance memory, increase reminiscence, promote group cohesiveness, increase the self-esteem of each player, and promote total group enjoyment.

Some questions can be opened up to the entire group, especially if a player is having difficulty with an answer. Many questions can also be used to make fun group lists by compiling answers from each player. For example, make a group list of foods that smell bad but taste good, or of foods that taste bad but smell good.

This guide gives sample questions from each sense category, with possible answers and additional questions to stimulate further discussion.



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**We often experience many wonderful smells outdoors. Some smells are specifically associated with nature, like the fresh smell of rain. What are some of your favorite outdoor smells?**

*Suggestions for answers may be roses, jasmine, mint, pine trees, barbeques, freshly mowed grass, and sunscreen.*

- **Other smells, like dirt and gasoline, might smell good to some but bad to others. This point would make for a good group discussion.**

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**When we were growing up, our parents used distinctive colognes, perfumes or after-shaves. They used some for every day and others for special occasions. Can you remember those smells? Do you remember the names of the scents?**



When you were young, adults used smelling salts. Did your parents ever use them with you? Do you remember other products with strong smells that were used for medicinal purposes?

*Smells may include Vick's® VapoRub®, rubbing alcohol, iodine, brandy.*

- Does anyone still use these things today?
- Are there others that are used now?



Name 3 things associated with the color yellow, for example, a sunflower.

*Answers may include lemons, bananas, caution signs, stripes down the middle of the road, the sun, daisies, butter, highlighters.*

- For a follow-up activity, pick another color and name things associated with it.

Spring is a time of new beginnings. We see things that we haven't seen in a while. What are some of the common sights of spring?

*Answers may include kites, trees leafing out, flowers blooming, short-sleeved shirts, shorts, people in the park.*

- What is your favorite season?
- What are some of the common sights of that season?

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**Name 3 tourist attractions in the U.S. that most visitors would like to see. Which tourist sites would you most like to see?**

*If you have a map available, players can point out where the attractions are. Others could add their answers using the map to pinpoint sites.*

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**Thinking back on the vacations you've taken, what is the sight that stands out as the most memorable?**

*A map would be useful for this question.*

- Have you returned to this sight?
- Would you like to see it again?

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**Do you have a favorite artist? What kind of art do you like best? Painting? Sculpture? Photography? Other?**

*If the player can't think of an answer, some possible artists to suggest are Michelangelo, Rembrandt, Van Gogh, Monet, Da Vinci, Picasso, Ansel Adams.*



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**Some foods are associated with certain seasons. What are some tastes we associate with summer?**

*Tastes may include food barbecued on a grill, watermelon, homemade ice cream, popsicles, hamburgers and hot dogs, corn on the cob.*

- Are there certain foods particularly associated with the other seasons?

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**We say that a person has good taste in people, in food, etc. Why do you think we use "taste" in this phrase? Name something for which you have good taste.**

*Answers may include friends, food, fashion, music, art, books, movies.*

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**Sometimes we won't taste something because of what it is. We've never tasted it, yet we'll say we don't like it. Can you think of a food for which**

## this is true for you?

*Answers may include escargot, brains, snake, squid, eel, sardines.*

- Would you be willing to try any of these foods today?

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## Salty is one of the 5 main tastes found in food. The others are sour, sweet, bitter, and umami (meaty). Name 3 foods often described as salty.

*Answers may include processed cheeses, smoked foods, canned soups, soy sauce, ham, potato chips.*

- Do you add salt to particular foods?
- As you've gotten older, do you add more or less salt?

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## Some foods have an unmistakably strong taste. Can you name 3?

*Answers may include onions, garlic, fish, Roquefort cheese, sourdough bread, vinegar.*

- Do you like strong tastes?
- Has your taste changed over the years?



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## Many articles of clothing have distinctive textures, for example, the denim in blue jeans. What others can you think of that are familiar?

*Answers may include corduroy, dotted Swiss, wool, terrycloth, velour, velvet.*

- Is there some material/texture that you particularly like?
- Are there any that you dislike?
- Provide a variety of materials for people to touch.

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## Can you name 3 things that have a rough texture? (An example would be sandpaper.)

*Other answers may include a man's beard, certain tools, wood, rocks, the outside of many types of melons.*

- Pick another texture and ask for examples.





There are many sounds that warn us of possible trouble. Can you describe 3 that may signify impending danger?

*Answers may include a loud crash, thunder, a scream, the crackle of fire, sirens, a car alarm, a fire alarm, the earth rumbling.*

- Can you think of a time when you've heard any of these sounds?

Animals communicate in a variety of ways. Name some animal sounds that are entertaining to you.

*Answers may include kittens purring, dogs "talking," pigs oinking, ducks quacking, horses neighing, birds chirping, beavers gnawing, whales and dolphins "singing."*

We tend to tune out some noises. For example, you're out to dinner with a friend, engaged in conversation, and ignore the conversation going on at the next table. Are there certain sounds you tend to tune out?

*Answers may include spouses (!), cell phones, car alarms, television, people talking, the hum of the refrigerator or other electrical appliance, clocks ticking.*

- Are there any sounds that you'd really like to be able to tune out, but just can't? (For example, the sound of wind chimes when it's windy, or a squeaky fan.)

Nature is all around us. We experience it in a variety of ways. What are some sounds of nature that you hear throughout the day?

*Answers may include birds chirping, water running in a fountain or a stream, soft rain, the wind, bees or flies buzzing.*

- You can find wonderful sounds of nature CDs at the library or at bookstores; play before or after this activity to stimulate responses.









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