

# A TOOLKIT FOR LOOKING AT ART

This digital toolkit is designed to help carers and activity coordinators incorporate art into the conversations and daily activities that they have with their care home residents. It explores ways of looking at and talking about art and using museum and gallery collections.

# This toolkit aims to

Show the benefit of using art to engage residents

[page 5 >](#)

Give you a framework for talking about art

[page 6-7 >](#)

Give you ideas for art discussions

[page 9 >](#)

Explore ways to incorporate art into other areas  
of your activity programme

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Ways to adapt your programme

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Show you how to measure success

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## Who is this toolkit for?

This is a flexible resource. The toolkit can be used in any environment by carers and activity coordinators looking to increase the variety of activities on offer. It can also be used by carers wanting to find alternative ways of engaging with individuals.

The toolkit aims to find a way to approach art that is enjoyable and accessible. You don't need to have a background in art or art history to use the toolkit. We don't want to 'teach' you about art but to help you use art to engage, inspire and connect with others.

We hope that you find this resource gives you ideas for short 'filling the gap' moments as well as in planning structured activities.

# What is art?

When we talk about 'art' this refers broadly to paintings, objects and museum collections. It needn't be limited to this when you deliver activities, however. We encourage you to think about the arts more widely and include other art forms such as poetry, drama and dance too.

We will use the Wallace Collection as a starting point and refer to the collection of paintings, decorative arts, arms and armour as examples throughout.

This toolkit can be used across any museum collection, and we encourage you to use it to explore your local museum or with any artworks that you enjoy.



# The benefits of engaging with art

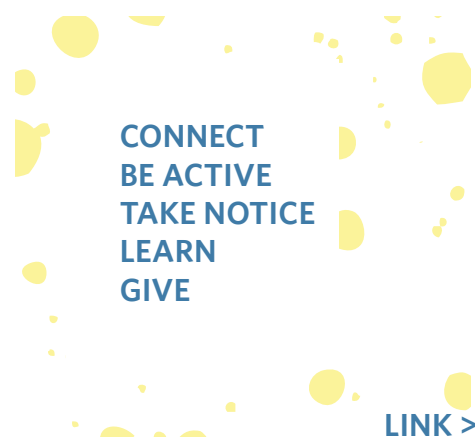
## More than art classes

You may run art classes or have visiting artists, but engaging with art does not need to be limited to practical art-making workshops. Not everyone that enjoys listening to music plays an instrument, and not everyone that likes art would like to draw or paint.

We will help you consider other ways in which you can use art in your programme of activities.

## Wellbeing

The charity Mind has identified five steps we can take to look after our health: the Five Ways to Wellbeing.



Looking at art can be a way to **connect** with others, **take notice** of a painting or museum object, **learn** about an artwork through sharing observations. It can also provide opportunities to **give** time and **be active** in the community of the care home.

## Person-centred care

Looking at art is a flexible activity: you can look at it one-to-one or as part of a group. You can look for a few minutes or longer; you can follow it up with other activities or leave it as a simple discussion session.

This flexibility makes it easy to provide arts engagement suitable for the different people in your care - taking into consideration interests, culture and beliefs - to demonstrate a person-centred approach to care.

## Empowering each other

This toolkit will help you to run art discussion sessions. This is different to a formal talk or lecture where you may bring in an external speaker.

We encourage you to create a collaborative environment that allows both staff and residents to participate equally. Everybody will have different prior knowledge of art and by looking, sharing ideas and discovering new things together, everyone is empowered to actively take part.

Don't worry about lacking knowledge. What matters is the experience of looking and sharing observations and ideas together. There is no wrong answer!



# Ways of talking about art

You don't need to be an expert or have any prior knowledge, just curiosity and an open mind.

Start with an artwork. Some suggested images and themes from the Wallace Collection can be found on page 10 of this pack. But you could start with any artwork you like to look at.

Ideas for linking to themes  
[page 10-13 >](#)

Does the individual have an artwork they particularly admire?

Perhaps a favourite postcard or an image on their wall?

Could you look at something from your local museum or an artwork from a place of cultural significance to the individual?

Suggested websites  
[page 18 >](#)

Encourage people to look and tell you what they can see.

Asking open ended questions can help guide and encourage a conversation:

**What can you see?**

**What do you notice or what catches your attention?**

**What can you see that makes you say that?**

**What else can you find?**

**How does it make you feel?**

When you're working with people living with dementia or any communication difficulties, you can start with simple observations and build on them. Take time as the individual notices different things.

If you're looking at a painting together you may identify whether there are people in it, what they are wearing, and their facial expressions or body language.

If you're looking at an object, the individual may consider what it's made from, it's shape, how big or heavy it is, and what it may have been used for.

**Does this artwork have a story?**

**What kind of person made/owned this?**

**What questions do you have about this artwork (and can you suggest any answers)?**

In a discussion session these questions can encourage curiosity, provoke discussion and lead to the sharing of ideas and interpretations. Paintings and objects can also stimulate memories and individuals may want to reminisce with you.





## Group size

Short, informal conversations can be a good way to gauge interest before running a group discussion session. Perhaps you could have some postcards on tables at tea time, put a couple of prints out with the newspapers, or watch an art programme on TV with a few people. Use resident forums to gain feedback.

When planning a group discussion you will need to consider how many people will be able to engage effectively – they will all need to be able to see the pictures, see each other and hear each other. We suggest six people around a table, and if you have more interest you can rerun the session.

## Knowing when to stop

The joy of looking at art in your care home is that you are in a comfortable and familiar environment (rather than a museum or gallery), but it can still be tiring looking, thinking and talking about art.

Consider the time of day that you run your group discussion, allow the conversation to move on if it feels right, and have other activities available if people are getting tired. Have a space where individuals can come and engage with art when they want to.





# Using art as a stimulus for discussion

You can use this framework to help plan discussion sessions on any number of themes.

## Choose a theme

A simple way of starting a discussion using art is to choose a theme. We've included some ideas on

[page 10 - 13 >](#)

## Prompt words

Think about words or phrases that link to that theme and do an online image search using those prompt words.

## Use pictures

You could choose a few pictures in advance and print enough copies for each person, or involve individuals in the process by enabling them to choose a theme and search for images using iPads/tablets.

## Active questioning

Start your conversation or discussion by using some of the questions on [pages 6 and 7 >](#)

Allow time for people to think about their responses, and don't forget to share your thoughts too. Encourage people to look at, interpret and question the artwork.

## Follow up activities

When the conversation comes to a close there may be opportunities for related follow-up activities. We have suggested a few for you.

# Choosing a theme

# Spring

## Artworks from the Collection



*Flowers in a Vase*, Jan van Huysum, 1726



*Basin*, Follower of Bernard Palissy, 1510-1590

## Prompt words

spring flowers:

daffodils  
cherry blossom  
snow drops  
bluebells

nature

new life

bulbs

birds

lambs

Easter

May Day

Passover

rainbows

Ramadan

Holi

spring  
equinox

## Follow up activities

- Press some flowers.
- You could use these artworks as inspiration for doing some flower arranging or creating flower mandalas, or drawing your own still life.

## Artworks from the Collection



[LINK >](#)

*Still Life with Lobster, Jan Davidsz. de Heem, 1643*



[LINK >](#)

*Manufacture de sèvres, Cup and Saucer, 1767*



[LINK >](#)

*A Boy Bringing Bread, Pieter de Hooch, 1663*

## Prompt words

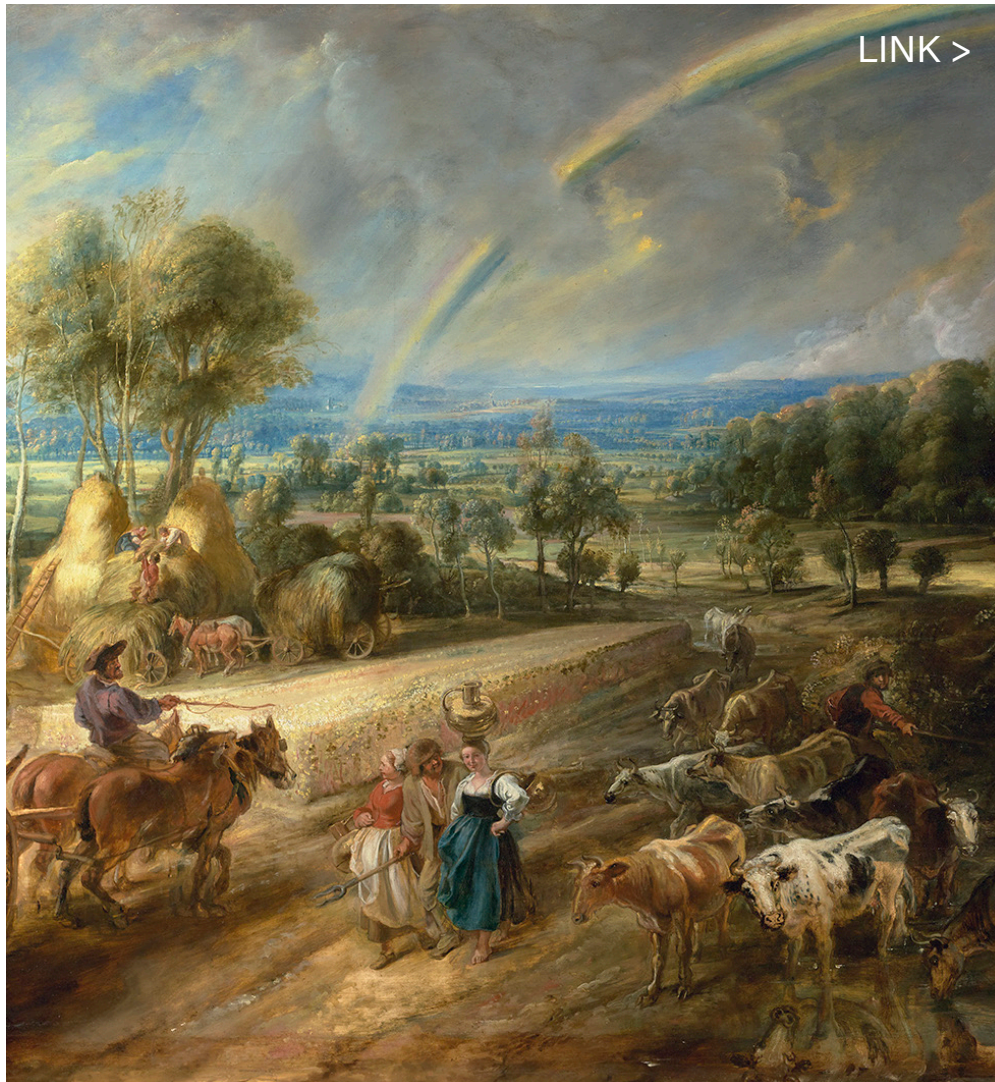
bread                      platter  
feast                      afternoon tea  
lobster                     grapes  
mussels                  celebration  
chocolate

## Follow up activities

- Make bread, biscuits or cake, set a table with a pretty cloth and napkins and have afternoon tea.
- Compare the food of different cultures and festivities.
- Create a still life set-up with some fruit, and sketch it.

# Colour

## Artworks from the Collection



*The Rainbow Landscape, Peter Paul Rubens, 1636*



*Mosque lamp, Egypt, 1350-1357*

## Prompt words

rainbow  
primary colours  
cool colours  
warm colours  
favourite colour  
stained glass

## Follow up activities

- Have group or one-to-one discussions on colour and mood; what colour are you today?
- Do you know any songs about rainbows?
- Look at paintings of rainbows by different artists.
- Use coloured tissue paper to make stained-glass windows

# Days of celebration

National days, new year celebrations and religious festivals, e.g. Ramadan, Hanukkah, Vaisakhi, Diwali, and Christmas.

Consider ways of using artworks in your celebration of important days throughout the year. Here are two examples:

## International Women's Day

### Artworks from the Collection



[LINK >](#)

*Madame Perregaux, Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, 1789*

### Follow up activity

- Create portraits of the women in your care home to display.

## Chinese New Year

### Artworks from the Collection



[LINK >](#)

*Gold Cup of Eternal Stability, China, 1740-1*



[LINK >](#)

*Incense burners, China 1736-1795*

### Follow up activities

- Explore patterns and motifs in Chinese decorative arts.
- Make shapes using pipe cleaners and glue them onto thick card or wooden blocks to make ink stamps.

# Connecting art to your activity programme

## Essential Living Skills

Look at objects used in daily life or pictures depicting household activities such as cooking or cleaning. Can you work out what all the brushes and pots were used for in the Augsburg Service?

### Artworks from the Collection



*A Woman Peeling Apples,*  
Pieter de Hooch, 1663



*The Augsburg Service,*  
Various silversmiths, 1767-73

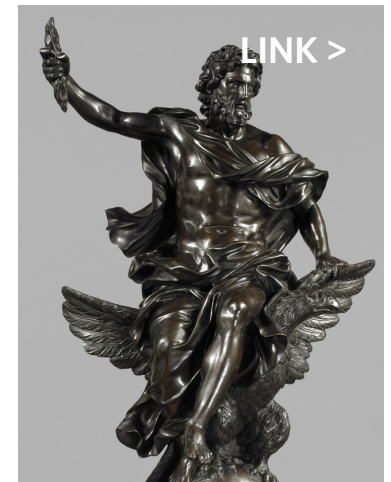
## Exercise Class

Look at images of children playing and adapt playground games into your exercise programme. You could chant skipping rhymes while tapping your feet, or use the figures in paintings or sculptures as inspiration for simple chair-based exercises.

### Artworks from the Collection



*Mademoiselle de Camargo Dancing,*  
Nicolas Lancret, 1730



*Jupiter Victorious over the  
Titans: 'Fire'*  
Alessandro Algardi,  
cast c. 1655 - 1681

## Music Session

Look at images of instruments or people making music and find appropriate instrumental music or sing traditional songs.

### Artwork from the Collection



*Merrymaking in a Tavern, Jan Steen, 1664*

## Creative Writing

Use a painting as the starting point for storymaking. Describe how the woman is feeling in three words. Write a short story or an acrostic poem.

### Artwork from the Collection



*The Lace Maker, Caspar Netscher, 1662*

## Quizzes and Puzzles

Create quizzes and games around artworks such as 'I Spy'

Do you have any paintings as jigsaw puzzles? Once you have completed the puzzle don't pack it away straight away, but chat about what the picture is!

### Artwork from the Collection



*Wood Marquetry*

# Adaptation

When working with individuals living with advanced care needs you may want to consider adapting your session. You could try:

## Sensory elements

If you're looking at spring-themed artworks have some real flowers for people to hold and smell; if you are looking at portraits include samples of different fabrics that are depicted in people's clothing.

## Simpler artworks

Choose artworks that won't overwhelm the individual with too much to look at. Abstract art and paintings with lots of action, e.g. a street scene, can be confusing. A still life with clear and contrasting colours is easier to understand.

## Print large images

Encourage people to hold the prints. A person may not be able to tell you what they're looking at but can show you by tracing their finger over the picture.

## Online content

Many organisations have virtual tours, audio tours and other digital resources available on their websites which can be good to share with individuals you're spending one-to-one time with. Some museums and libraries offer a loan scheme too.

All of the above are just suggestions, discover what works best for you.







# Ways of measuring success

A successful session doesn't always have a tangible outcome. The Five Ways to Wellbeing can provide evidence for positive engagement in the following ways:

## CONNECTING

- asking questions
- wanting to talk
- connecting with others, including staff

## GIVING

- asking questions of each other
- sharing an anecdote or memory
- helping another individual

## TAKING NOTICE

- looking or examining
- noticing details
- listening
- being present in the moment

## BEING ACTIVE

- moving any parts of the body
- actively looking and asking questions
- using hands or arms for holding, pointing or gesturing

## LEARNING

- showing an interest
- demonstrating new knowledge and understanding
- being inspired to create or wanting to find out more

# Taking things further

If you would like to make art more prominent in your care home you could create a dedicated display area with seating and paper and pencils. A noticeboard with a different art poster displayed each month, or art books in communal areas for people to look through can encourage people to start the process of looking at art without attending a formal activity.

We would love to know how you are using artworks in your care homes. Please tell us what works, what you have developed, and how we can support you.

Contact us at  
[community@wallacecollection.org](mailto:community@wallacecollection.org)  
[catherine@ipicturethis.org.uk](mailto:catherine@ipicturethis.org.uk)



# Suggested resources

We've used examples from the Wallace Collection. You can find many more through the online collections and YouTube channel:

**Wallace Collection >**

[wallacecollection.org](http://wallacecollection.org)

**Wallace Collection YouTube >**

[youtube.com/user/TheWallacecollection](https://youtube.com/user/TheWallacecollection)

We encourage you to explore other local and national collections. Museums cover a range of interests such as science, transport, and local history:

**Museums >**

[museums.co.uk](http://museums.co.uk)

**Historic UK >**

[historic-uk.com](http://historic-uk.com)

There are many online collections of national and international paintings:

**Art UK >**

[artuk.org](http://artuk.org)

**Google Arts & Culture >**

[artsandculture.google.com](http://artsandculture.google.com)

**Wiki Art >**

[wikiart.org](http://wikiart.org)

# The Wallace Collection

The Wallace Collection is a national museum in a historic house in central London. It is the collection of five generations of one family and comprises paintings, sculpture, porcelain, arms and armour.

The museum has an active programme of activities for a range of visitors and has been running outreach sessions at day centres, care homes and memory cafes since 2005.

For more information visit  
[www.wallacecollection.org](http://www.wallacecollection.org)

or email  
[community@wallacecollection.org](mailto:community@wallacecollection.org)

# I Picture This

I Picture This believes that everyone should be able to see great art and brings art to people that would find it difficult to visit museums and galleries.

Working with care settings and community groups in Hertfordshire, I Picture This delivers discussion sessions and provides resources that use art to bring people together, share ideas and promote wellbeing.

For more information visit  
[www.ipicturethis.org.uk](http://www.ipicturethis.org.uk)

or email  
[catherine@ipicturethis.org](mailto:catherine@ipicturethis.org)