



MUSIC & MEMORY[®] at Home

A Caregiver's Guide to
Creating Personalized Playlists



When someone in your care lives with dementia or another cognitive impairment, it can be tremendously challenging to communicate and find ways to help them rediscover pleasure in the world. Chronic pain or physical impairments may present similar challenges.

Personalized music can bridge that gap and help you to deepen your relationship or reconnect with one another. Beloved songs can ease mental, emotional and physical pain, and improve quality of life. This guide will help you set up a personalized playlist for someone at home using a computer, an iTunes account and an iTunes compatible music player with headphones.

Grounded in extensive neuroscience research and field experience, our work with thousands of individuals has shown that people benefit profoundly from hearing favorite songs that tap into fond memories. Here are some outcomes you may expect:

Someone who has been

- silent or less communicative may begin to talk and be more social;
- sad and depressed may feel happier;
- less mobile may become more physically active;
- distressed may feel more relaxed.

Each individual's response is unique, and the ability to benefit from personalized music will depend in large part on the particulars of their cognitive or physical issues. But chances are good that they will find more pleasure in life once again, and that you will gain a peaceful, relaxing way to renew or enhance your relationship. Discovering that music, together, can bring new insights and enjoyment to you, as well.

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About MUSIC & MEMORY®

MUSIC & MEMORY® brings joy into the lives of people suffering from Alzheimer's, other forms of dementia and a wide range of cognitive and physical conditions. Our approach is simple and effective: We train caregivers how to set up personalized music playlists on music devices for those in their care. These musical favorites tap into deep memories not lost to dementia and can reawaken people, enabling them to feel like themselves again, converse, socialize and stay present. Our foundational program in long-term care has informed our work with individuals at home. With support from community partners, we are training caregivers at home how to help someone improve their quality of life and age in place longer with personalized music.

We Are Here to Help

Support for your Music & Memory at Home Kit is offered by your program sponsor. For a list of sponsors, and to access additional support from Music & Memory, visit musicandmemory.org/musictoolsupport.

Benefits of Personalized Music

Musical favorites are connected to deep emotional recall. That beloved song brings joy, eases pain, reduces stress and can facilitate social connection. Listening to personalized music can enhance time together and deepen relationships that may have seemed lost, especially to dementia. For caregivers, personalized music provides an entryway to more meaningful relationships — as well as a way to ease transitions, avoid distress and save time.

Again and again, we hear that our program can be life-changing for everyone involved:

- At last, here is a way to give pleasure to people with any stage of dementia and other cognitive and physical conditions.
- Personalized music offers an enjoyable, fulfilling activity for those who are bed-bound or otherwise restricted by medical therapies or physical limitations.
- Listening to musical favorites increases cooperation and attention, and reduces resistance to care, activities of daily living and transitions — a real boost for caregivers.
- Personalized music reduces distress and sundowning.
- Beloved songs enhance engagement and socialization, fostering a calmer environment for everyone.
- Developing a personalized playlist can bridge generations, enhance family relationships and even lead to discovery of treasured family history.
- Music & Memory provides a valuable alternative to psychotropic medications, enhances nutrition and reduces the need for hospitalization.



How to Set Up a Personalized Playlist

Discover Their Favorite Music

To set up a personalized playlist, your first step is to sit down together to select the right music. Music players hold hundreds of songs, and you can expand your range of selections as you develop playlists. Whichever player you use, however, your goal is to identify at least 100 selections to start. Think in terms of 10 to 15 artists that are his or her favorites. Included at the conclusion of this guide is a list of top artists from different genres of music that may help you discover potential music favorites.

While you might assume that the easiest way to go about this is to pick artists and songs that were popular when the person was young, that can be a hit-or-miss process. The best place to start is to ask. If they have trouble communicating, you may need the help of another family member or good friend who can fill in the blanks. Be sure to make notes as you talk, and continue this conversation as they begin to use the music device, so you can modify and grow the number of selections and playlists. Preview the selections on a laptop or smartphone to gauge the listener's reaction.

Here are some questions to get the conversation started:

- What music did you listen to when you were young?
- Did you sing at religious services? What were your favorite hymns or other religious music?
- Did you enjoy going to Broadway shows or musicals? Which ones?
- Do you still have any records or tapes that were favorites? What are they? Where can I find them?
- Who was your favorite performer, group, band or orchestra?
- Who was your favorite classical composer?
- Can you hum any of your favorites?
- What songs did you dance to at your wedding? high school prom?

It's always worth asking basic questions like these, because they may open the door to a longer, deeper conversation. But don't be discouraged if you don't get very far, since these questions are quite direct. Sometimes the person won't know the answer right away, or sometimes they won't be able to recall because of their particular cognitive challenges. That's when you need to hone your music detective skills and look for more clues.

Become a Music Detective

What's your favorite music? Seems like a simple enough question. Discovering the music most loved by someone in your care is at the heart of Music & Memory's personalized music program.

But the answers aren't always obvious and, sometimes, they're downright hard to get, especially when the person you're asking cannot articulate—or if they're from a foreign country that's unfamiliar to you, or if they simply have trouble explaining what they're remembering.

Now it's time to become a "music detective," working one-to-one with participants. Family members and caregivers can play an important role in discovering their musical preferences, favorite pieces and performing artists. Here are a few key points to remember:

- Focus on musical favorites from the participant's formative years, ages 10 to 25.
- Avoid genre-based playlists; tailor to the listener's true favorites.
- Spend 30 minutes to an hour for music sampling; make it fun! This can be bonding time for the whole family.
- Going slow is okay. Discovery takes time. Everyone benefits from a carefully selected playlist.



Use the **Music Assessment Questionnaire** on page 13 and the **Musical Selections Possibilities** found on page 20 of this guide.

- **Music Assessment Questionnaire:** Start a conversation about musical preferences and record responses. *(See Music Detective Basics, on the following page.)* For non-verbal participants, observe their body language as you sample songs.
- **Music-Artist Possibilities:** Sometimes you may know that a participant likes a certain genre of music, but don't know how to move forward from there. Consult page 20 of this guide to find top singers and musicians of popular music genres. Participants can point out which artists they enjoy or you could play top songs from each genre and watch for positive responses. **NOTE:** *This tool is for discovery, only. Avoid creating genre playlists (e.g. Country Music, Big Bands). Playlists must be specific to individual tastes to impact and maximize benefits.*

Given that the Carter Family recorded in the '30s and '40s, chances are you're on the right track. Educated guesswork is the key to success. If the person can't communicate or struggles with memory, your best bet is to find out as much as you can from other sources. In addition to age, find out where they were born (if you don't already know), where they have lived, or their first language.

You may be able to find out about favorite hobbies, sports and other pastimes that could suggest a starting point. What radio station do friends or family members recall them listening to? What TV shows? Were they 'musical'? Did they play an instrument or sing in a choir? All of this information can help you solve the musical favorites mystery.

Music Detective Basics

Start with the fundamentals:

- Did you listen to music when you were young?
- What's your favorite song?
- Did anyone in your family play music? Did you?
- What song did you dance to at your wedding?
- Do you have any favorite music from attending a place of worship?

It's always worth it to ask such basic questions, because they may open the door to a longer, deeper conversation. But don't be discouraged if you don't get very far, since these questions are quite direct. Sometimes the individual won't know the answer right away, or won't be able to recall.

That's when you need to hone your music detective skills and look for clues.

Age-Related Clues

Armed with a few basic facts, including age and where the person lived at an earlier point in time, you can find a side door to the person's musical favorites. For example:

- A person with dementia didn't know what kind of music she liked.
- She was from the Midwest, and lived in Hollywood in the early '40s.
- She remembered taking dance lessons with her brother, and going out to dance at the Palladium.

That was enough information to create a playlist of early Sinatra and Tommy Dorsey, who performed at the Palladium - plus some Lawrence Welk to tap her Midwest roots.

Bits and Pieces

Sometimes all you'll get from your initial questions is a phrase and a general guess of the type of music: "It was something about wavy black hair or waving black hair. It was an old country singer from when I was young." Use context and Internet searches to see what you can learn. For example:

- If the individual is in their 90s, they might be thinking of music from the '40s.
- A search for "waving black hair country music" pulls up several listings for Wildwood Flower.
- The search also displays a quote by Mother Maybelle Carter of the original Carter Family, who recorded the song: "It's the most popular song we ever recorded, and there's hardly a country group who doesn't use this song."

Given that the Carter Family recorded in the '30s and '40s, chances are you're on the right track.

What If They Can't Communicate?

For the uncommunicative, your best bet is to observe their body language as you sample songs, and find out as much as you can from other sources, particularly family and friends, about the individual's background. In addition to age, find out where they were born, where they lived over the course of their life, and their first language.

You may be able to find out about favorite hobbies, sports and other pastimes that could suggest a starting point. What radio station do family members recall them listening to? What TV shows? Were they musical? Did they play an instrument or sing in a choir? All of this information can help you solve the musical favorites mystery.

Overcoming Language Barriers

If the individual speaks a different language, start with family members and friends who may be able to interpret. Caregivers may be of help with translating, as well. If you experience some resistance and skepticism about your knowledge of another culture's music, don't let that dissuade you. Do your homework. Search the Internet for "top [name of country] singers of all time" and see what turns up.

For further assistance, check out the document *Top Elder Music in 28 Languages* in the support website: musicandmemory.org/musictoolsupport



How to Know When You've Found the Right Music

As you hone in on musical favorites, sample the five or ten most popular songs from iTunes on your laptop, smartphone and other tech tools available at home. Note the participant's reaction. Responses can be immediate and may include tapping fingers, making eye contact, talking and laughing.

Aim for five to ten songs from each artist in your music library, and include the best three to four songs from that artist on a single playlist. We cannot stress enough: **Always avoid "filler" music and hone in on songs that are most popular or requested.**

Ultimately you want to have 150+ songs per playlist, but focus on quality over quantity, in the same way we select music for ourselves.

Being a successful music detective requires patience and persistence, as well as some intuition and luck. But the journey is deeply rewarding. You will learn more about the person in your care, and seeing that face light up when you uncover the right music makes all that effort worthwhile.

Music Assessment Questionnaire

Name: _____ Age: _____ Date: _____

Where did you grow up? _____ Native Language: _____

Do you have a favorite type of music? **((Use Music Selection Possibilities list at the end of this guide for examples of genres. Try to get as specific as possible))**

What music did you listen to when you were young?

Who was your favorite performer, group, band, orchestra?

Did you sing at religious services?

What denomination and what part of the country? **(i.e., Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist, Jewish)**

Favorite hymns or other religious music?

Did you enjoy going to Broadway shows or musicals?

Did you have favorite TV shows or movies? **(theme songs from shows or movie soundtracks can elicit responses)**

Do you remember going to see live music **(rock, symphony, ballet, jazz, polka, clubs?)**

Do you like to dance?

What type of dance? **(i.e., salsa, ballroom, swing, disco, square dance, polka, line)**

Do you have a favorite classical music composer?

What songs did you dance to at your wedding?

High school prom?

Were you in the armed services?

What branch, years and where did you serve?

Do you still have any records, tapes, CDs that were favorites?

Where can I find them?

Can you hum any favorite songs? **(can use Shazam to identify the song if you don't know it)**

Other Notes:

Create an iTunes Account

If you are ready to begin on your own or want to add music to your playlist, the first step is setting up an iTunes account.

Your iTunes account serves as the master library for all of the music you select for the playlists that you will load onto the iPod. You can set up a variety of playlists, and you can also include other content, such as audio books, old-time radio programs and much more.

Apple continuously updates iTunes. Apple's iTunes Tutorials provides up-to-date information on how to download and install iTunes, and use the iTunes library. There is an entire section of the Apple website devoted to support for iTunes: <https://support.apple.com/itunes>. If you are not comfortable setting up an iTunes account, the iPod or another music device on your own, tap into the support provided by your local Alzheimer's resource center.

Make a note of your Apple ID and iTunes password here:

ID _____

Password _____

Once you've defined the individual's musical tastes, you can begin downloading songs from their favorite artists into your iTunes library. If you're not sure which songs to download, you can use the iTunes sampling feature, which allows you to listen to 90 seconds of the selection for free. Sit with the person and play a few samples to see if you're on track and don't worry if this takes time, perhaps several listening sessions are needed. Pay attention to body language -- swaying, tapping toes and other movements can tell you there is a positive response to a particular song.

Please note: Whatever music and other media that you add to your iTunes account, we urge you to respect copyright laws and follow legal music download practices. This means paying for any music that you download. iTunes cost about a dollar a song, but if you purchase a "best of" album

collection, you'll probably save money on more selections from the person's favorite musician. Adding CDs that you already own is a perfectly legal way to build up your iTunes library, being mindful to only download the tracks you need to create the playlist.

Help the Person You Care For Learn to Use the Music Device

Tailor your approach to accommodate the person's ability. If they can use a TV remote, then they may be able to use the music device independently. However, many elders need partial or total assistance. Be patient. Expect the process to take time and repetition as you introduce the iPod and teach how to operate it.

First, plug in the headphones and adjust them to a comfortable position on the person's head. Be sure to place the headphones so L is on the left ear and R is on the right to ensure that they fit the head properly.

Set the volume on the device and ask if it's loud enough. Practice using controls on the device a few times, so the person gains confidence and you're sure they understand what to do. If possible, teach how to skip to the next song, so that they will have more control over choices.

If the person you care for uses hearing aids, test the headphones to see if they fit easily over the hearing aids. It may take some experimentation to see if they are comfortable listening through the combination of hearing aids and headphones. You may try taking them out or test to see if the headphones work over the hearing aids. If there is any concern about the person's ability to hear the music this way, consult with an audiologist.

You can set the music device to run through the playlist in the order that the songs were loaded or to automatically shuffle the songs to vary the listening experience. Experiment to see which they prefer.

Keep track of their experience. Make notes so you remember which songs work, and which you may need to eliminate.

Create a System for Listening Sessions and Music Device Management

If the person you're caring for needs help and there are others around, assign someone to help manage the music device and encourage its use at certain times throughout the day. If the person employs a caregiver, she or he can help with the music. You may want to set a schedule, such as three 30-minute listening sessions—morning, afternoon and evening. Keep a set of directions about how to use the music device handy, if others are not familiar with the technology.

Be sure to set up a plan for recharging the music device. It's best to plug in the charger at night, so the device is ready for use the next day. Or, leave plugged into a speaker/dock. One of the most common complaints is that the device "doesn't work," but this is often due to a drained battery when the user falls asleep listening to music and the device is left on overnight. If the battery is charged and the person you care for complains that they can't hear anything, check the volume to be sure it's set properly.

You can store the equipment in a plastic food container to keep it clean and easy to find, and protect it from loss or falls. Keep the music device away from liquids, which can ruin it.



Personalized Playlists and Alzheimer's

For those living with Alzheimer's, music can be particularly beneficial. Here are a few pointers to keep in mind:

- Timing is very important. You can greatly reduce or head off agitation by playing music to distract and calm.
- The person in your care may be more alert, engaged and talkative if they listen to the personalized playlist regularly, week after week and month after month.
- Listening to familiar music will help the person feel better, be more social and cooperative, while giving you and other caregivers much needed respite.

A Few More Things to Remember

Everyone is different. While there is no guarantee that personalized music will work for every individual, we know that it will help to improve quality of life for most. Best of all, there are no adverse effects—so there is no downside to trying and everything to gain!

If the person in your care must transition to a nursing home or assisted living facility, it's always a great idea to set them up with their own music device in the new living situation and use it when you visit. However, staff may be unable to administer your family member's music. This is why we highly recommend that you find a MUSIC & MEMORYSM Certified Care Organization or a facility that is willing to start certification as soon as possible. This will educate and train everyone in the facility to support the person's use of the device and improve their experience.

If the person in your care becomes more agitated listening to music, it may mean that one or more of the music selections should be swapped out for something more calming. Wait and try different music at another time to evaluate.

Sometimes music brings back positive memories, sometimes negative. If the person becomes emotional while listening, keep in mind that it may be just fine for that to happen. You be the judge.

Creating a personalized playlist for someone in your care is a musical journey for both of you. The individual will gain a wonderful way to relax, remember and find enjoyment—especially if music has played an important role in his or her life. And you will get to know each other even better as you share musical favorites and the memories that go with them. Both of you will gain quality time and peaceful moments together.

Personalized music is a gift that keeps on giving in a way that few other gifts can, especially at this stage in a person's life. Congratulations on taking this important step to providing comfort and joy.



Musical Selection Possibilities (circle artists of interest)

Easy Listening

Barbra Streisand
Barry Manilow
Engelbert Humperdinck
Frank Sinatra
Les Paul & Mary Ford
Liberace
Montavani
Nat King Cole
Peggy Lee
Rosemary Clooney
The Four Lads
Tommy Dorsey
Tony Bennett

Country

Alabama
Brad Paisly
Clint Black
Willie Nelson
Dolly Parton
Eagles
Dwight Yoakam
Garth Brooks
Kenny Rogers
Merle Haggard

Spiritual

Andrae Crouch
Bebe & Cece Winanas
Bishop Noel Jones
Dinah Washington
Donnie McClurkin
Gladys Knight
Jackie Ball
Kirk Franklin
Mahalia Jackson
Mavis Staples &
Lucky Peterson
MercyMe
Micah Stampley
Rev. James Cleveland
Selah
Shirley Caesar
Smokie Norful
Wintley Phipps
Yolanda Adams

Big Bands/Swing

Benny Goodman
Eddy Duchin
Duke Ellington
Billy Eckstine
Glenn Miller
Les Brown
Count Basie
Artie Shaw
Woody Herman

Broadway

Cabaret
Camelot
Carousel
Gypsy
Sound of Music
South Pacific
Sunset Boulevard
The Music Man
West Side Story

R&B

Alicia Keys
Aretha Franklin
Diana Ross
Donna Summer
Fats Domino
Four Tops
Jackson 5
Lionel Richie
Luther Vandross
Mariah Carey
Marvin Gaye
Michael Jackson
Otis Redding
Ray Charles
Sam Cooke
Smokey Robinson
Stevie Wonder
The O'Jays
The Stylistics
The Temptations

Classical

Beethoven
Bach
Chopin
Tchaikovsky
Stravinsky
Brahms
Mozart
Andrea Bocelli

Spanish

Celia Cruz
El Gran Combo
de Puerto Rico
Graciela Beltran
Jose Carreras
Juan Gabriel
Marc Anthony
Placido Domingo
Tito Rojas
Victor Manuelle
Vicente Fernandez

Rock

Beach Boys
Beatles
Billy Joel
Carpenters
Elton John
Elvis Presley
Four Seasons
Four Tops
Gene Pitney
Melissa Etheridge
Neil Young
Rolling Stones
Sonny & Cher
The Byrds
The Duprees
The Eagles
The Hollies

Other Categories:

Patriotic

Eastern Europe

Instrumental

Calypso

Klezmer

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musicandmemory.org