



The Surprise Style-Off

Game Program & Setup Guide



Introduction

This week, I added something new to my residential aged care activity diary. To be honest, I wasn't sure how it would go, but I was so surprised by how well it was received! There is nothing quite like seeing a room full of residents lighting up with genuine laughter, so I am excited to be sharing my easy-to-follow, step-by-step guide with you all.

While we all love our classic bingo and quiz mornings, sometimes the "same old" can feel a bit flat. "The Surprise Style-Off" is my new go-to for when the energy needs a boost. It's a bit like "Hot Potato" but with a creative twist that gets everyone involved, no matter their cognitive level.

By bringing this into your routine, you're offering a wonderful alternative to stationary games. It's inclusive, easy to set up, and most importantly, it's a source of shared joy and meaningful connection in the moment.

Why This Activity Works

After 20 years of facilitating group activities for seniors, I've learned that the best games are the ones that take the pressure off. "The Surprise Style-Off" works so well because:

- **It Builds Real Connection:** There's something about seeing a friend in a giant pair of pink sunglasses that just breaks the ice and starts a conversation.
- **It Gets People Moving:** Passing that ball around is great for gentle upper body movement and coordination.
- **It's Low Pressure:** There are no "wrong" answers here. It's all about the surprise and the giggle, making it perfect for residents who might struggle with more complex rules.

If you have residents who prefer a quieter pace, you can easily transition from the laughter of this game into some meaningful reminiscing about old fashion trends or favorite outfits from years gone by.

What You'll Need

You probably have most of this in your activity cupboard already!

Item	What I Use	Why It's Great
The Passing Item	A soft ball or balloon	Easy and safe for all residents to pass.
The Style Basket	A large laundry basket or decorated box	To hold all accessories; kept safely in the center of the circle.
Accessories	Feather boas, giant glasses, hats, leis	Instant smiles and laughter.
Themed Bits	Sombreros, capes, clip-on ties	Keeps things fresh and interesting.
Music	A good speaker and a fun playlist	Sets the energy for the whole room.

How to Run "The Surprise Style-Off"

I've found that keeping things simple is the secret to a successful session. Here is how I facilitate the game:



1. Get the Circle Ready

Arrange your residents in a comfortable circle. Make sure everyone has a good view of each other so they can enjoy the "reveal." If you have a larger group, use two baskets or split into two smaller circles so the game keeps moving quickly.



2. Pick Your Tunes

Music is everything! I always reach for an upbeat, nostalgic playlist—the 50s and 60s are usually a huge hit. As the music plays, the residents pass a soft ball or balloon around the circle. The "Style Basket" sits safely in the middle of the circle, a treasure chest of surprises.



3. The Big Reveal

When you pause the music, whoever is holding the ball/balloon gets to choose an accessory from the "Style Basket" in the middle (no peeking!). The best part is the look on their face when they pull out a feather boa or a silly hat! They put it on and wear it for the rest of the game.



4. The Grand Finale

We keep going until the basket is empty. To finish off, I love to have a little "Grand Finale" where everyone shows off their new look. It's the perfect time to snap a few photos for the community newsletter or to show families.

Making It Work for Everyone

The beauty of this game is how adaptable it is. For my residents in memory care, I focus on sensory items that feel nice to touch. If the group is feeling a bit more competitive, we sometimes turn it into a "What Am I?" Guessing Game using the items as clues.

Whether it's a rainy Tuesday or a special celebration, I hope this brings as much laughter to your community as it did to mine!



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