



TBH Focus

Mind | *Sharpen Skills*

- Research shows that cognitive training can revive skills that diminish with age, such as attention, quick thinking, multi-tasking, short-term memory, and reasoning—and that some of these benefits can last at least ten years.
- Timed activities—playing games against the clock—can help to maintain intellectual skills.

The TBH Science

“On your mark. Get set. *GO!*” There’s nothing like racing against the clock in order to complete a task or make a deadline that forces us to stay focused, think fast, and be quick and nimble in our approach. When time is of the essence and we have to hurry to get something done, it allows us to accomplish the task itself, of course, but there’s a brain bonus: Research has shown that mental hustling helps us sharpen and maintain intellectual skills—especially attention, speed, executive control, and memory, all of which tend to decline as we get older.

One of the best ways to flex our mental muscles is to play games or work puzzles that are timed—including board games like Boggle and Pictionary (in which each turn is measured using a mini-hourglass), electronic hand-held games, and games played on consoles like Wii and X-Box. Games and puzzles we play online are often timed as well and many can be downloaded for free on phones and tablets, which means we can fit in a brain workout whenever we find ourselves with a little time to spare—in line at the grocery, in the doctor’s office waiting room, in the kitchen while the pasta boils.

You Will Need

- Timed games including (see Resources):
 - ◆ Board games
 - ◆ Electronic hand-held games
 - ◆ Console games (such as Wii)



- Introduce the activity. Use the TBH Focus and the TBH Science to explain how playing timed games can benefit brain health.
 - Talk about ways in which we often have to work against the clock in daily life, such as meeting a work deadline or getting the steps in a dance or exercise class. Have folks come up with other examples where they “play” against the clock.
 - Set up several different timed games and activities. Divide participants into groups so that they can rotate through the different games.
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Got five minutes? Give your brain a workout! Download a timed game or puzzle to your laptop, tablet, or phone (there are lots of free ones) and start playing. Research has found that these types of activities exercise intellectual skills that typically decline with age—especially attention, speed, executive control, and memory—by forcing us to focus, think fast, and be nimble. The best part? They’re fun!



Resources

See the Resources section of your online Toolkit for all worksheets, links, and additional materials for this activity.
