



# Senior Series

The Ohio  
Department of  
Aging



For more information, visit the Ohio Department of Aging web site at: <http://www.state.oh.us/age/>  
and Ohio State University Extension's "Aging in Ohio" web site at: <http://www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~seniors/>

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## Gift Ideas for Nursing Home Visits

**B**oredom and loneliness are common complaints made by elders who reside in skilled care facilities. Instead of always bringing a plant or flowers, which provide visual pleasure but cannot occupy an elder's time, bring other gifts which they can enjoy after you have left. Here are some ideas:

- A magazine or *Reader's Digest* which they can read and use to reminisce with other residents.
- Foreign coins or penny postcards of places they have visited in years past.
- Regular or large print books (especially if there are visual limitations) or audio books they can listen to on their own.
- A magnifying glass to help with small print items.
- A small, portable radio so they can listen to a favorite station or the local news.
- Bring anecdotes, stories, or cartoons clipped from newspapers or magazines to make them laugh or smile.
- Stationery or note cards to keep in touch with friends.
- A padded sheepskin cover for their wheelchair or bed to make life a little more comfortable.
- Share photographs of your family, your vacation, your house, or garden. Ask the children to draw a picture or write a story especially for your loved one and bring this as a surprise.
- Bring AND send cards and decorations on special holidays to brighten their room.
- Make a special photo album filled with pictures and messages from friends and loved ones.
- If their diet allows, bring a favorite home cooked treat such as oven-baked biscuits, fresh fruit off your tree, fresh vegetables out of your garden, or their own recipe for pumpkin bread.
- For a cognitively impaired loved one, bring a shoe box full of differently

textured items (i.e., sandpaper, velvet, fuzzy fur, gingham, burlap) to touch and manipulate. Often those with dementia find comfort in repetitive motions such as rubbing cloth or petting an animal.

- Another idea for an older loved one who has difficulty communicating is touch/aroma therapy. Bring a nicely scented lotion and ask if you could put the lotion on your loved one's hands, therefore providing touch as well as a pleasant aroma to associate with your visit.

Although assisting an aging family member with their move to a residential care facility can often be an emotionally difficult experience, it is important you focus your energy on making regular visits to provide care and comfort. Some visits, especially in the beginning, may be difficult and cause you to feel sadness or guilt. While these are normal emotions and should not be discouraged, try not to think of this transition only as an ending but instead focus on the time you still have together and ways of filling that time with expressions of your love and affection.

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