LEARNING BOX OF UNPLUGGED ACTIVITIES

The Architect of Family Memories - organising archives

This unplugged activity harnesses seniors' passion for family history and memories whilst teaching them how to categorise and structure data. Participants are faced with "chaos" – a box full of old photographs, letters, and documents (mock-ups). Their task is to sort them into a logical system so that younger generations can easily navigate the archive. By using physical, highly tangible objects, the activity naturally introduces computational thinking concepts like decomposition (categorising) and abstraction (filtering key metadata) in a context that holds deep emotional connection and social value.

Target Group

- ☑ Low-skilled adults with low digital competences
- ☑ Low-skilled adults with limited formal education or qualifications
- ☑ Low-skilled adults with low participation in lifelong learning / training opportunities

Learning Objectives

- ✓ To harness the passion for family history to teach practical data categorization and organization.
- ✓ To learn how to separate essential data from non-essential details (metadata extraction).
- ✓ To build confidence in managing and structuring complex information systems without digital tools.

Competence Areas

a) *Innovation Competences*
- ☑ Creativity
- ☐ Critical thinking
- ☑ Problem solving
- ☐ Communication
- ☐ Collaboration

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Theme

Family history, data organization, and information structuring

Duration

60 - 90 min

Level

Beginner

Computational Thinking Steps Used

- ☑ Decomposition
- ☐ Pattern recognition
- ☑ Abstraction
- ☑ Algorithmic thinking

Methodological Approach

- ☑ Gamification
- ☑ Challenge-Based Learning
- ☑ Collaborative learning
- ☑ Experiential learning

b) Information Literacy Competences

- ☑ Ability to access, understand, and critically analyse information
- ☑ Interpretation of digital and visual content
- ☐ Awareness of media influence and biases

c) Life and Career Competences

- ☐ Flexibility and adaptability
- ☑ Initiative and autonomy
- ☑ Sociability and intercultural competence
- ☐ Productivity
- ☐ Leadership and responsibility

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the activity, participants will be able to:

- Deconstruct a large, chaotic pile of information into logical, easy-to-navigate categories.
- Extract key metadata (e.g., date, name, location) from complex or text-heavy documents.
- Create and test a functional, physical archiving system.

Notes

- Materials Needed: A "chaos box" for each group containing mock-up vintage photographs, old handwritten letters, postcards, and official documents (like birth certificates or old tickets). Blank index cards, physical folders, sticky notes, markers, and a timer.
- Facilitator Notes: Older people are more likely to engage with tasks that relate to their family and life experiences. Ensure the materials are highly tangible—the physical act of sorting papers is crucial for people with low digital literacy. Encourage the sharing of life experiences and storytelling during the sorting phase, as this builds social value, cooperation, and self-confidence.

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Step 1: Introduction and Challenge

Introduce the "chaos boxes" filled with mixed-up family history items. Present the authentic challenge: "Design a memory storage system in which your granddaughter can find a photo of her great-grandmother in less than 30 seconds." Explain the gamification element: at the end, teams will race against the clock to find items in each other's systems.

Duration app. 15 minutes

Step 2: Decomposition - Sorting the photos

Instruct the groups to empty their boxes and examine the materials. They must practice **decomposition** by dividing the massive archive into smaller, logical categories. Will they sort by decade (1960s, 1970s)? By family branch (The Smiths, The Millers)? By event type (Weddings, Holidays)?

Duration app. 20 minutes

Step 3: Abstraction - Extracting Key Data

Once categorized, teams look at complex documents, such as a long, multi-page handwritten letter. They must practice **abstraction**: deciding which information is essential to catalog the item (e.g., Sender: Uncle John; Date: 1982; Topic: Moving to the city) and which details can be ignored for the sake of the index. They write these key data points on sticky notes and attach them to the documents.

Duration app. 20 minutes

Step 4: Algorithmic Thinking - Building the Final System

Participants place their sorted, tagged items into physical folders. They must create a simple "Table of Contents" or visual index on the outside of the folders so that a stranger (or a "granddaughter") knows exactly what is inside without having to read every paper.

Duration app. 15 minutes

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Step 5: The "Race Against Time" and Debrief

Groups swap their organized archives. The facilitator acts as the "grandchild" and gives prompts (e.g., "Find the letter about the 1975 road trip" or "Find a photo of Aunt Mary"). Start the timer to see how fast the new group can navigate the storage system. Conclude with a discussion on how this physical sorting uses the exact same logic as creating folders on a computer desktop or searching for files on a smartphone.

Duration app. 20 minutes.