

RETIREMENT ACTIVITIES

Introduction

We've all heard seniors say: "Since I retired I haven't stopped", or "I'm busier now than when I was working." Retirement, especially in the early years, can be very busy.

Other people, in retirement, seem to fall into a slump. They don't socialize, they don't go out, they don't seem to do anything.

Of course, there are some things you must do, but these won't take up all your time. How do you ensure that your leisure time is filled with activities that you enjoy and find personally rewarding, including time for relaxation, and avoid things you'd really rather not be doing?

When planning their retirement, many people view things from an individual perspective only; they forget the importance of the collective. But, many retirees give back to society and work on improving things for the generations that follow. Former union members are particularly likely to continue to be activists once they retire.

Chahal and Lucas warn that "This stage of life is a whole new game and you do not yet know what works and what does not. Experimentation is essential, but it can mean occasionally heading down a path that's not right for you." So, if you join a squash club and realise it's not for you, move on. If the quilting you thought would be fun turns out to be a drag, drop it.

Chahal and Lucas again: "Discovering what does not work is as valid an experimental result as discovering what does work. In retirement we are testing new choices, and many of these will be discarded."

Session objectives

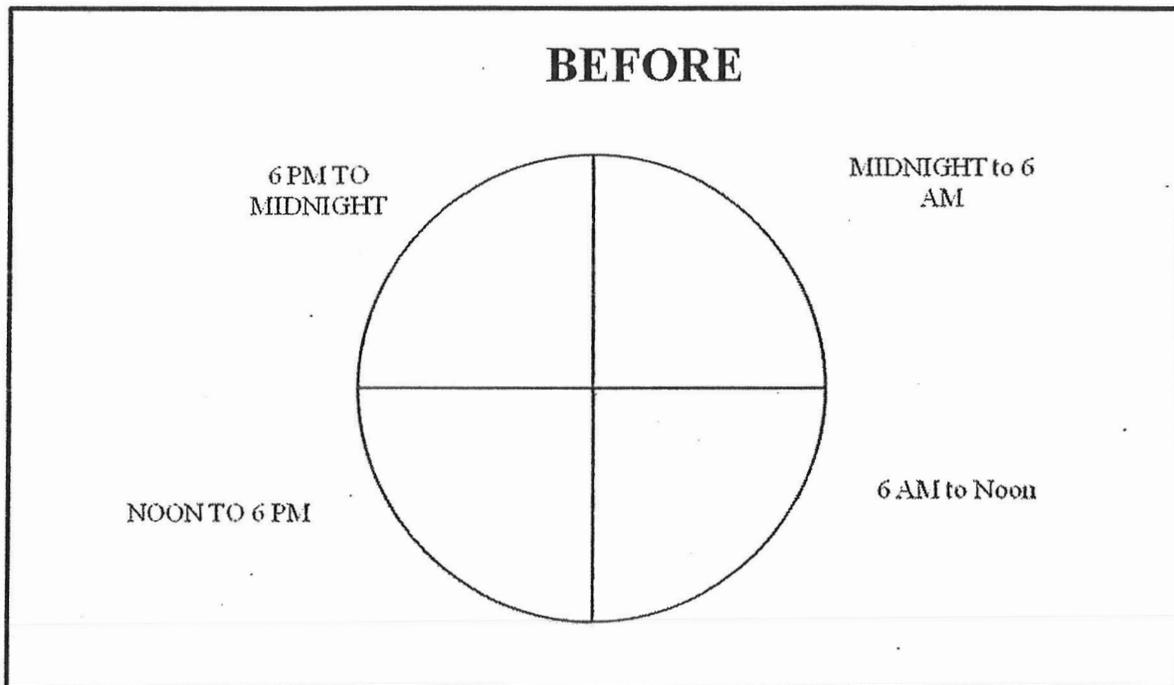
By the end of this session, participants will:

- Have a clear understanding of things they must do or have done for them.
- Have a better understanding of what they like to do.
- Have a realistic idea of how much time they will have for different activities in retirement.
- Be aware of the range of possibilities that volunteering presents.
- Know how they can continue union and activist work in retirement, and be motivated to do so.
- Know about the Congress of Union Retirees of Canada's activities and be motivated to join.

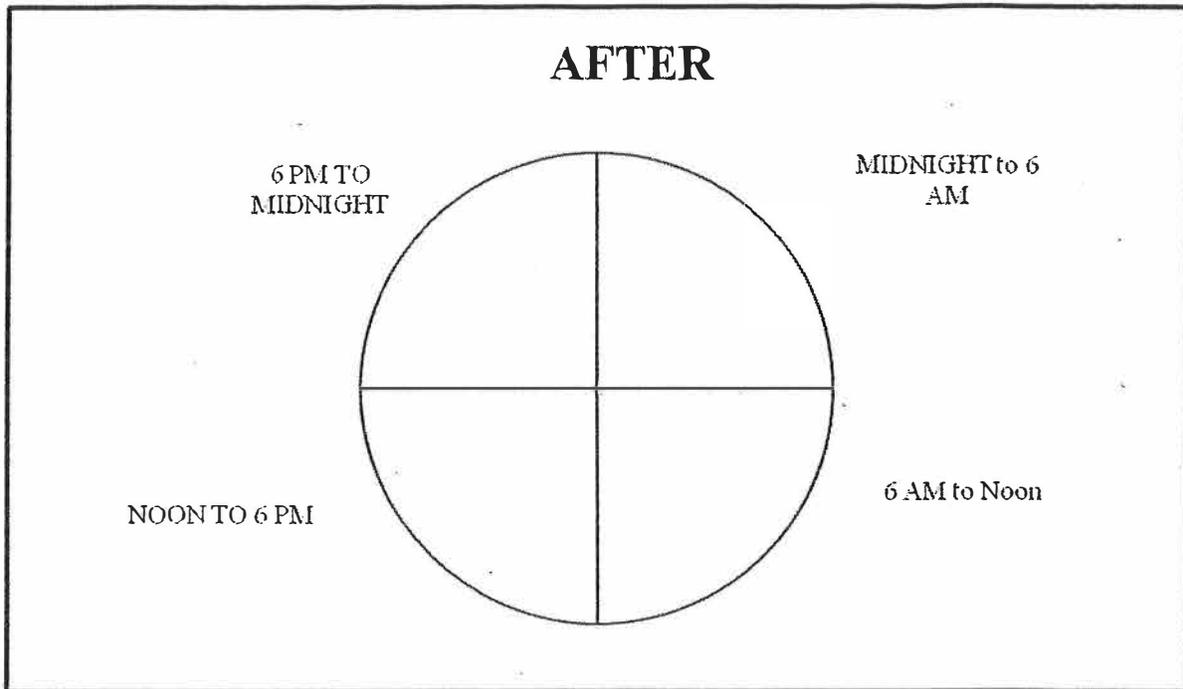
Things we must do

Estimate how you budget your time now, and how you will budget your time in retirement. Allow enough time for things you should do: sleep, personal grooming, meals, shopping, exercise, socializing and relaxation. Then examine what time is left for leisure activities.

Retirement Time Clock



Note. Shift workers may have to complete more than one copy of this clock, one for each of the different shifts they work.



Leisure time activities

- **Go hunting for old dreams**

We all have dreams from our youth that we abandoned when we entered the labour market or started a family. Have these dreams and desires flown away, or are they buried in our hearts? Often they are just waiting to resurface.

It is worthwhile to remember and to dare. Why hold back any longer? Take hold of those dreams and desires and update your wishes. Is there anything you've wanted to do for the longest time? What is it? Why not do it?

Are you afraid of your family's reaction? Come on, don't censor yourself and don't let others censor you either. Do you think you're too old? Look around; you might have the surprise of your life. Gymnasiums, community halls, bowling alleys and pool halls, amateur theatrical groups, choirs, hunting outfitters and fishing camps and even classrooms and lecture halls are filled with people who are just as old as you are.

The exercises on the next two pages will help you remember things you used to like to do.

Activity Lifeline

Our leisure time in retirement is limited. So, we must decide how we will spend this time. Complete the following chart. It will help you to identify activities you may want to pursue in retirement and others to avoid.

- Step 1. In the left hand column, write down the activities, interests and skills that you remember enjoying at each stage of your life.
- Step 2. In the right hand column, note the activities that you did not enjoy.

ENJOYED	YEARS OF AGE	DID NOT ENJOY
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20

30

40

50

60

Leisure Inventory

Complete this exercise. It will help you identify leisure time activities you want to pursue in retirement, and activities you want to avoid.

1. Things I would like to **stop** doing
2. Things I want to **continue** doing
3. Things I like doing **alone**.
4. Things I like doing with other **people**
5. Things I do **well**
6. Things I would like to **try**
7. Things I would like to do **more** of (when I have more time)
8. Things I would like **to do well**
9. Things I like doing with my **spouse or partner**.
10. Great **experiences I have had** (make you feel good, good to be alive).
11. Great experiences I **would like to have** (dreams you wish would come true).
12. Things that require a **risk** (physical, emotional, educational, financial)

Examine your answers to these questions. If they point to things you want to do in retirement, add them to your list of retirement goals.

Activities where you live

Wherever you live, there are things to do. Cities, towns and villages have organized activities of all kinds: indoor, outdoor, online – courses, gardening, crafts, music, singing, sculpture, physical activities to name a few. These activities are often advertised in newspapers, online or in the mail.

Take a look at those little pamphlets or booklets. Surely you will discover treasures. Get out; avoid being isolated within the four walls of your house. You will surely meet others with tastes and aspirations similar to your own. You can fill that void you feel because you are in less frequent contact with your work colleagues. Who knows? If you are single, maybe you will meet your soul mate.

Three categories of activity you might consider are returning to school, volunteering and being involved in your union.

Return to school

What an idea - going back to school! You may feel much too old for the classroom. Maybe, when you were young, school was an ordeal and you just wanted to leave. But you're still passionate about history. You always wanted to improve your computer skills. Because of a TV series, you've found that you love literature. You'd like to learn more about gardening, cooking or canoe building.

The idea begins to catch on, but you say it's too late to learn. Absolutely false, there is no age limit to learning. To minimize the loss of memory, the brain must be active. It's all about desire and attitude. And don't think that when you return to school you need to work for a diploma. Often you can take a course without the need to write essays and exams. To do so costs less than if you wrote them. You can take a class just for the pleasure of learning. Pleasure gives wings.

The vast majority of school boards, colleges and universities provide you with the opportunity to take courses tailored to your situation as an independent student. Colleges usually have several courses tailored to the elderly. Why deny yourself? It only takes a call and a request for information.

Volunteering

• Introduction

A good way of using your knowledge and skills after retirement is by volunteering to serve your community. After having been on the receiving end for so many years, you are now in a position to give to others. Volunteering is a good way to stay involved and to keep abreast of current events. In many cases, it provides an opportunity for you to serve as an activist.

Many community organizations, cultural institutions, and social agencies depend on their volunteers in order to survive. The local little theatre group, the Boy Scouts, and seniors' centres are examples of groups that can only function because of their dedicated corps of volunteers. As a volunteer you can be as active as you wish. Most volunteers are trained for their job. As a volunteer you can expect to choose what you want to do and assume as much responsibility as you wish. You may be reimbursed for expenses.

There is so much to be done! With more married women employed outside the home, a major source of volunteer help has disappeared. Active retired people, utilizing their specific skills, have the energy to do anything that is needed from instructing downhill skiing to answering a telephone in a distress centre.

Helping young people who live far away from their grandparents can do a lot to establish a vital connection between the old and the young.

You can choose to work with people of all ages, degrees of ability, and ethnic origins in many facets of service. Local volunteer centres, seniors' centres, faith-based organizations or community information centres can put you in touch with organizations that need your help.

There is no reason for a retired person to have "*nothing to do.*" There is a tremendous need for your talents.

• Volunteers benefit from volunteering

Volunteer work has provided many retirees with a rare opportunity to help others, contributing to the community and benefiting themselves in the process. Many retirees report that volunteer work is one of the most rewarding challenges that they have ever taken up. If you would like to improve your community life, have the time to contribute and have a genuine interest in people, why not think about volunteering your talents for a worthy cause?

- **What can you do as a volunteer?**

Here are a few suggestions:

- Read to children in hospital
- Visit a shut in, elderly person, or child
- Be a tour guide at a zoo, museum, art gallery or university
- Serve as a board member
- Deliver meals-on-wheels
- Read to the blind
- Help prepare income tax reports
- Entertain others – sing, dance, play music at seniors' centres or nursing homes
- Assist teachers in the classroom

A reminder Some volunteers, e.g., those working with children, may be required to pass a police check before they are allowed to work in certain situations. If a group you are thinking of volunteering with has such a policy, they will be able to tell you how to have the police check completed.

Volunteer centres recruit, interview and refer you to an organization which will train you. Volunteers can have challenging jobs, participate in the decision-making process, and assume executive or board positions with an agency or organization.

The list of organizations that are in dire need of assistance is unlimited. If you want to volunteer, you will be spoiled for choice. Whether it's hospitals, associations of retired people, pressure groups such as trade union retirees, groups fighting for respect for free expression or civil liberties, there is no group that is not interested in enlisting volunteers. Only your field of interest may restrict your choice.

Volunteering can be an exciting and rewarding new career, but be careful. If you volunteer on the board of an organization, for example, you should enquire about Director's liability insurance. Don't leave yourself open to legal difficulties that arise from your volunteer work.

Another warning: don't let your volunteering become like a second job. It's up to you to make clear how much time you want to give.

- **Volunteering in schools**

More and more retired people are involved at schools. They may assist students at homework workshops. They help children to succeed in their academic year and, in addition, they establish supportive relationships with future generations. For some children, these retirees are the only adults who give them attention. Where homework workshops exist, the failure rate has fallen sharply. But not all schools offer this service, it is mainly community-based organizations that do. If homework workshops do not exist in your neighbourhood why not start one yourself?

- **Give and Receive**

Today there are a number of community agencies, social service programs, hospitals, and religious organizations which desperately need your help. Without the help of volunteers many important social and community services would never reach those most in need. If you have some experience in working with children, older people, the sick and the disabled or can cook, sew, drive a car, make phone calls, teach or even knock on doors, there are many agencies waiting for you.

Learning and socializing with other volunteers could well change your life. You might also realize how lucky you really are to have your health and economic security. So don't sit at home feeling sorry for yourself. Find out about life and the challenges of others by volunteering your time and energy to the people of your community.

Union activity in retirement

Just because you're retired doesn't mean you should sever all connections with your union. For one thing, you may wish to stay in touch with work and union colleagues, even though you no longer work with them.

Unions bargain the wages and conditions of people at work, and retirees are no longer working. But unions also negotiate benefits such as pensions that are of direct importance to retirees. The union may have direct control over some or all of the members of the pensions committee that makes decisions about a retiree's major source of income

Also, unions may negotiate on issues such as health benefits that may be part of the retirees' retirement package.

Some unions have local chapters, clubs or area councils for retirees, and a few have a national organization of local chapters. Here is an opportunity for you to get involved.

Many retirees continue to stay in touch with the union by checking the website regularly or being on the mailing list. This enables you to keep in touch with what's happening and even participate in campaigns, demonstrations, barbeques, picnics, etc.

More than 50 Activities to Stick on your Refrigerator

1. Participate in programs of the local union or regional council
2. Work on a political campaign
3. Lead a group discussion
4. Learn to play a musical instrument
5. Go hunting or fishing
6. Visit a sick friend
7. Trace the history of your family or your local community
8. Visit new restaurants
9. Organize trips for yourself or others
10. Seek new friends
11. Affiliate with a group for neighbourhood improvement or crime prevention
12. Join a masters swim club
13. Start walking for exercise
14. Have a reunion or a picnic
15. Learn a new job or new hobby
16. Volunteer to help children in their studies
17. Learn watercolour or oil painting
18. Participate in competitions or sporting events
19. Learn to play a new game
20. Invite a friend over to eat at your home
21. Learn a new dance
22. See what educational TV has to offer
23. See a good movie
24. Visit churches of different religious beliefs
25. Attend conferences
26. Go to local music concerts
27. Read the newspaper
28. Visit the local library
29. Write to friends and family
30. Subscribe to a new magazine or newspaper

31. Cook exotic dishes (or learn to cook if you don't know how)
32. Become a member at a centre for retirees
33. Adopt a pet
34. Join Facebook; start to Tweet
35. Learn photography
36. Redecorate a part of your house
37. Start a collection
38. Visit local museums
39. Join a health club and go regularly
40. Visit a zoo or amusement park
41. Make a trip to the country, or go to the city if you live in the country
42. Participate in special events such as exhibitions of dogs, cats, visual arts, botanical gardens, etc.
43. Take a course at your local continuing education centre
44. Follow the trials at your local courthouse
45. Visit a local television station
46. Tidy your basement, your garage or your shed
47. Hunt for flea markets or garage sales
48. Attend meetings of your city council
49. Participate in a contest
50. Sort your old photographs
51. Try sewing, crafts, gardening, etc.
52. Establish your horoscope
53. Participate in community social events such as dances and parties
54. Go camping
55. Go through your old address books and contact old friends