Reading

1 Write your name as fast as you can with your right hand, then do the same with your left hand. Was one easier? Does it look better? Discuss the reason why with a partner.

2 Read the article, and decide if these sentences are true (T) or false (F).

1 You can learn to write with the wrong hand. ____
2 Learning makes new nerve cells grow. ____
3 As we get older, large numbers of brain cells die. ____
4 If our brain is healthy, it continues to develop when we are old. ____
5 Mental stimulation keeps your memory good. ____

Old age and the brain

If you hold a pen in your 'wrong' hand, writing becomes uncomfortable and difficult. But keep doing it and you will get better at it – you learn. This is because connections between neurons in your brain get stronger, and your brain grows.

In our early years our brains grow very fast as we learn language, writing, numbers, music, and how to coordinate movement. By the time we are teenagers, each neuron in our brain has connected to tens of thousands of other neurons, and every time we have a new thought or memory, our brains make new connections. Just as muscles get stronger by using them, the brain develops when it is stimulated. Without stimulation, it gradually dies.

A healthy brain does not lose huge numbers of brain cells as it ages. It continues to rewire itself and grow new neurons. However, degenerative brain diseases are very common in old age, and so we associate ageing with diseases such as Alzheimer's disease.

Even though these diseases are very common in the elderly, it is a mistake to think that old age automatically equals mental decline. When elderly people who do not have Alzheimer's disease suffer age-related losses of memory and motor skills, it is often not because of ageing, but because of inactivity and lack of mental stimulation.

3 Find words in the text with these meanings.

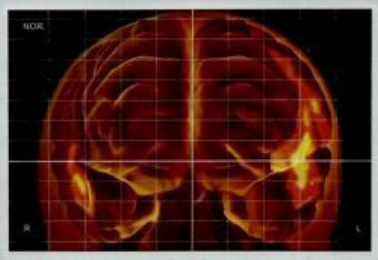
1 to make things happen at the same time
c_____
2 to change the electrical connections
r_____
3 conditions that kill brain cells
d_____ _____ _____
4 loss of the ability to use your brain well
m_____ d_____
5 connected to getting old
a_____-r_____
6 the ability to control your body's movement
m_____ s_____

4 Try these brain exercises. Do you know any others?

- Name the colours of the following words as fast as you can. Don't read the words but say what colour they are.

BLUE BROWN PURPLE YELLOW
GREEN MULTICOLOURED ORANGE
RED BLACK PINK WHITE GREY

- Read a page of writing upside-down.



LIVEWORKSHEETS

2 🎧 Listen to two elderly people in a care home talking. Do they mention any of the points in your list?



3 🎧 Listen again and tick (✓) the things that Edith (the first speaker) mentions.

Edith doesn't like …

- ☐ the staff
- ☐ Barbara
- ☐ her own name
- ☐ bingo
- ☐ coach trips
- ☐ her own home
- ☐ her old life
- ☐ the food
- ☐ washing up

Edith wants …

- ☐ respect
- ☐ friends
- ☐ privacy
- ☐ to play bingo
- ☐ more stimulation
- ☐ less stimulation
- ☐ to go to the seaside
- ☐ independence
- ☐ more food
- ☐ to go home

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Vocabulary

Problems and aids

1 Work in pairs. Match the adjectives with the cases. Say the adjectives as you do the exercise. The stressed part of each word is in **bold**.

An elderly person who …

1	can not leave her bed	a	frail
2	often wets himself	b	im**mob**ile
3	breaks a bone easily	c	**bed**ridden
4	can't hear very well	d	con**fused**
5	cannot move around freely	e	inde**pen**dent
6	often can't remember things	f	for**get**ful
7	wears his pyjamas in the street	g	in**con**tinent
8	can't see very well	h	short**sight**ed
9	likes to be free	i	deaf

LIVEWORKSHEETS