

Arts and cultural engagement 'linked to slower pace of biological ageing'

Level 1: Elementary

1 Warmer

- a. Many different activities can help keep our minds and bodies healthy. Think of the activities you, your friends and your family enjoy. Which activities do you like the most? Why?

1. ☐ Creative & cultural activities: painting, singing, theatre, _____
2. ☐ Physical activities: football, walking, yoga, _____
3. ☐ Social activities: going out with friends, visiting with family, _____
4. ☐ Educational activities: museums, reading, writing, _____

2 Key words

- a. Choose the correct word to match each definition. Then find and highlight them in the article to read them in context. Some words may appear in a different form in the article.

extraordinary

affordable

heritage

crafting

estimate

1. traditions, culture and artistic items from the past _____
2. amazing, excellent, extremely special or unusual _____
3. the hobby of making arts and decorations by hand _____
4. to make an educated guess about size or value _____
5. inexpensive or easy for people to buy or pay for _____

pace

impressive

vital

link

optimism

6. the speed something happens, moves or progresses _____
7. a mental attitude of hope and positivity _____
8. extremely important or necessary, essential _____
9. worthy of admiration, respect or appreciation _____
10. to connect or join two or more things together _____

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b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity.

1. Runners try to keep the same _____ when they train for a marathon.
2. It's a good idea to _____ the total cost of items before you buy them.
3. My professor is very _____ – she speaks more than ten languages!
4. Clean water is _____ to the health of all living things.
5. Sia enjoys _____ – she makes beautiful things for friends and family.
6. Rents in London and New York are very high – they aren't _____.
7. Museums are a wonderful way to learn about history and _____.
8. I love detective shows – I always use the _____ to try to solve the case.
9. _____ is important – it lets you stay focused on the positive parts of life.
10. This rainforest is _____ – it has so many beautiful plants and animals.

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Research from UCL suggests visiting art galleries or museums, singing and painting can help improve health outcomes

Denis Campbell

12 May, 2026

- 1 Singing, painting or visiting a gallery or museum helps people age more slowly, based on the latest study to link arts and culture with improved health.
- 2 The findings are the first to show that both participating in arts activities and attending events lead to people staying biologically younger.
- 3 "These results show the health impact of the arts at a biological level. They recognise arts and culture as a health-promoting behaviour like exercise," said Professor Daisy Fancourt, the lead author of the research.
- 4 Slower ageing does not mean someone will live longer. The study tests biological ageing to make predictions about mortality. Previous studies also show a link between the arts and longer lifespan.
- 5 In the study, people who did art at least weekly slowed their ageing by four per cent. Monthly activities slow ageing by three per cent.
- 6 Another test showed that people who did an arts activity at least once a week were about a year younger biologically than people who rarely did art. People who exercised once a week were only six months younger.
- 7 The benefit of the arts on the pace people age is dramatic. It's similar to the difference between smokers and people who stopped smoking.
- 8 The study is based on blood test and survey response data from 3,556 adults. It uses blood samples to estimate people's biological age.
- 9 Participants were asked how often they participated in singing, dancing, painting, photography or crafting, or attended an art exhibition or event, visited a heritage site such as a monument or historic building or park, or went to a museum, or library.
- 10 "Many of us know that taking part in creative and cultural activities is vital for a happy, meaningful life," said Hollie Smith-Charles, of Arts Council England. "These impressive new findings show how vital it is that everyone, everywhere has access to excellent and affordable culture."
- 11 "We have known for a long time that getting creative has extraordinary benefits for our health. This research shows that arts and culture can even slow down the biological clock," said Mark Ball, of the Southbank Centre, a multi-arts venue in London.
- 12 The Southbank Centre was created in 1951. Ball said, "It was a recognition that, after the sadness of the second world war, the country needed to come together through the arts to find a sense of optimism and healing. That is still true and is needed now, more than ever."

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3 Comprehension check

a. Read the article again. Use the words in the box to complete the summary.

biologically
weekly

smokers
creative

events
access

exercise
slowly

Arts and culture, like singing, painting and photography, can help people age more

(1) _____. This includes both participating in art

(2) _____, and attending museums or galleries. A new study from the

UK explains the health impacts of arts and culture. For example, people who do arts at least

once (3) _____ slow ageing by four percent. These people are about a

year younger (4) _____ than people who rarely do art. People who do

(5) _____ weekly are only about six months younger biologically. The

benefits of the arts on health are dramatic. They're similar to the difference between

(6) _____ and people who stopped smoking. Many people now realise

that taking part in (7) _____ and cultural activities is an important part

of life. The study shows that people everywhere should have (8) _____

to the arts.

4 Key language

a. This article uses specialised language to discuss health and medicine. Find the words below in the article. Match the words to the definitions.

1. biological level _____

a. the fact that all living things must die

2. health-promoting _____

b. a measure of the daily processes in the body

3. mortality _____

c. a focus on the physical part of a human's body

4. lifespan _____

d. the total length of time a person or animal lives

5. biological clock _____

e. actions or attitudes that are good for health and well-being

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b. Complete the sentences below with a word from the previous activity.

1. Dogs have an average _____ of 10 to 15 years.
2. The scientist studies the effects of healthy behaviours at the _____.
3. Our city offers _____ activities like exercise and cookery classes.

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these questions.

1. The article talks about 'biological' age. What do you think this means?
2. Do you think arts and culture always slow ageing? Why or why not?

6 In your own words

a. Imagine that you are in charge of building a new community centre for older adults in your town or city. Work in small groups to make a plan for the centre. Prepare a poster to advertise the new centre to the members of your community. Include information about the points below.

- Where is the centre located?
- Does it cost money to attend? How much?
- Is it open to people of all ages? Why or why not?
- What types of arts and cultural activities are offered?
- Can community members organise their own arts and cultural events?
- What other activities are offered? Why?

b. Share your plan with the class. Take a vote to decide which community centre would be the best option for your town or city.