

Autism: Accommodation and Support Options for Education Settings

DSM-5-TR Symptom	Strength	Accommodation and Support Options
<p>Criteria A1, A2, A3</p> <p>...deficits in social-emotional reciprocity.</p> <p>...deficits in non-verbal communicative behaviours.</p> <p>...deficits in developing, maintaining and understanding relationships.</p>	<p>SOCIAL APPROACH IS DISTINCT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social motivation is interest focused. • Connect through shared interest. • Info-dumping; small talk is unnecessary. • Focus on communicative efficiency. • Flat or highly expressive affect. • Can have limited or intense experience of emotions. • Honest, loyal, compassionate. • Prefers to have a couple of close friends. • Can develop close friendships quickly. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be accepting and inclusive of distinct social approaches (e.g., if an Autistic individual is not smiling this does not necessarily mean they are angry). 2. Don't discriminate because communication style is direct. 3. Provide an individual work tasks/assessment options, rather than in a group because Autistic people can find group settings distressing or distracting because of social differences, and therefore they are often unable to demonstrate their capabilities in group assessments. 4. If oral presentations are required, allow presentation to the lecturer without other students present, because Autistic people can find it difficult to concentrate and can experience distress when other people are looking directly at them. 5. Develop a plan to minimise time in the classroom with peers and engage with content online instead, because\ being in a room with many people for lectures, tutorials and practicums can be socially overwhelming and result in difficulty taking in presented information. 6. Provide a quiet space away from others because Autistic individuals can function better if they have had social and sensory breaks between commitments.

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		<p>7. Provide access to voice-to-text or text-to-voice technology, and other apps (e.g., Bionic reading app) if this is required to support the Autistic individual to communicate their ideas.</p> <p>8. Provide closed captioning on recorded lectures.</p> <p>9. Allow audio-recording of lectures so that the Autistic individual can replay content to support learning that may have been less than optimal in a classroom setting with many other students where the Autistic individual may be masking and therefore have reduced capacity to listen and learn effectively.</p>
<p>Criterion B1</p> <p>...stereotyped or repetitive motor movements, use of objects or speech.</p>	<p>STIMMING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repetitive behaviour when excited. • Repetition is calming. • Thrives with repetition. 	<p>10.Allow movement and multiple movement breaks, without needing to give a reason to leave class.</p> <p>11.Allow fidget toys.</p> <p>12.Provide alternate seating or workstations (e.g., standing desks, beanbags)</p>
<p>Criterion B2</p> <p>...insistence on sameness, inflexible adherence to routines, or ritualised patterns of verbal or nonverbal behaviour...</p>	<p>SAMENESS</p> <p>Thrives when have established a routine.</p> <p>Perfectionistic tendencies</p> <p>Notice things/errors others don't and motivated to correct them.</p>	<p>13.Flexible deadlines for tasks and assessments, if requested, so that Autistic individual can complete one task or assessment item at a time; switching between tasks can be difficult for some Autistic individuals).</p> <p>14.Provide clear and documented standards for performance, because Autistic people thrive when there is structure.</p>

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		<p>15. Provide structure and, if possible, an example of how a task needs to be completed, so that the task can be completed uniquely and in alignment with expectations because neurodivergent people often need support to understand expectations but once they do they produce exceptional outputs.</p> <p>16. Provide advanced notice of changes to schedule because unexpected change can be distressing for Autistic individuals.</p> <p>17. Provide specific feedback because Autistic people communicate with efficiency and directly.</p> <p>18. Allow the Autistic individual to choose a seat or workstation that they can work at because Autistic people thrive when routine is implemented.</p>
<p>Criterion B3</p> <p>...highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal in intensity or focus.</p>	<p>SPECIAL INTERESTS</p> <p>Special interests spark joy.</p> <p>Can hyper-focus on interest-based tasks.</p> <p>Can learn effectively about interests.</p> <p>Can remember many facts about interests.</p> <p>Motivated to solve complex problems in areas of interest.</p>	<p>19. Allow choice of format to demonstrate knowledge and skills for assessment because autistic people thrive when they have autonomy and are often highly skilled in producing outputs in formats known to them.</p>

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<p>Criterion B4</p> <p>...hyper- or hypo-reactivity to sensory input or unusual interest in sensory aspects of the environment.</p>	<p>SENSORY EXPERIENCES</p> <p>Hypo-sensitivity: can withstand sensory experiences that most others can't.</p> <p>Hyper-sensitivity: aware of sensory experiences that most other people aren't.</p> <p>Could be sensory seeking or sensory avoiding.</p>	<p>20. Allow audio-recording of lectures/tutorials/meetings for review afterwards if required, because neurodivergent people may need to review the content when they are not experiencing social or sensory input and can therefore listen and learn more effectively.</p> <p>21. For educational exams, allow completion in a room separate from peers and with reduced sensory input and with extra allocated time.</p> <p>22. Limit the use of fragrances in the education setting (e.g., flowers, perfumes).</p> <p>23. Reduce sensory impact of the environment (e.g. lighting adjustments, noise reductions, independent working area) and allow sensory equipment to use, as required (e.g. noise cancelling headphones).</p>