

The KEYHOLE® Rainbow Resource

Autism: Top Twelve Tips

- 1 Learn as much as you can about autism.** Knowledge of your child and how they see the world can help you predict and react appropriately to situations.
- Most episodes of behaviour that is challenging can be anxiety or panic attacks in reaction to various triggers. These triggers are important to be aware of and can include noise, smell, lights, routine change. Observing behaviours over time can help you to **recognise these triggers and plan accordingly.**
- An autistic child may take longer to process verbal information. To help, remember the **'10 second rule'** – wait for 10 seconds after asking a question to allow your child to process information and respond.
- When information is presented verbally, keep words to a minimum and use only the **essential language**, e.g. 'coat in hall'. Use **concrete language** and avoid abstract ideas like 'hop into the car'.
- When instructing your child, think about the **behaviour you want the child to do**, rather than what you want them to stop doing. For example, if you tell your child to 'stop hitting', they may not know what to do instead and become confused. Instead, telling them 'hands down' reinforces the positive behaviour that you want them to complete.
- Use visual information** to help your child to understand. This could be objects, pictures or symbols. This will help your child to understand concepts like choice and be able to answer by pointing or touching the visual material. For example, show cup of water or juice and allow the child to take the one they would like.
- Your child may have a fixed interest which makes them feel secure in an unpredictable world. It is important to **allow your child to engage in this interest** (unless dangerous) as it is pleasurable and calming. You can use structure to balance this interest with other activities. For example, first jigsaw (activity we are practising), then trains (preferred item).
- An autistic child can have more difficulty **generalising new skills** (using a skill in lots of different environments rather than just the area it was taught in). You may have to support generalisation by teaching or practising the skills in multiple environments (e.g. putting coat on at home and in playgroup, using different types of soap dispensers).
- Some autistic children prefer rules (they bring order and consistency to the world). Having a **clear, predictable routine** will help your child to cope and feel comfortable.
- If your child is going to be introduced to a new situation, make this as familiar as possible to them by **letting them know what to expect.** You can explain in simple language, using visuals or a schedule to show what they will be doing or read a story to them about the new activity/environment. This could be used for many situations like going on holiday, starting a new school or going for a day out to the zoo.
- Life is full of things that are not expected and that don't always follow the rules. Since change can be difficult for a autistic child, help your child to cope by **teaching strategies to deal with change.** You can practice this by introducing change in controlled and positive ways, for example, going to the park instead of the shop after school. Show your child the photo of shop, then show an 'x' over this and a photo of park instead.
- Carry a distractor toy** with you when possible. If you know that squeezing a stress toy or playdoh calms your child, keep this with you to use when your child is stressed.



ABOUT ME

I like these toys/activities:

ROUTINES

I like routines at certain times. These are:

You can help me with my routine by:

SELF CARE

I like to eat/drink:

You can help me to eat/drink by:

Toileting information:

COMMUNICATION

I communicate with you by:

If I want something I will:

If I am scared or in pain I will:

You can help me to understand by:

OTHER INFORMATION

SENSORY

These things upset me:

These things calm me down: