

Autism Tips

Here are some tips that can help children who may have various challenges associated with autism*

Socialization

- **Model appropriate social interactions** such as eye contact and back and forth exchanges for your child
- **Role play scenarios** such as introducing yourself, using or responding to gestures, and non-verbal body language
- **Use scripts to support conversation** or assist with asking/answering questions, and fade scripts over time (dry erase boards help with fading during practice)
- **Use social stories** with your child as the main character and pictures of him/her to depict appropriate responses to scenarios (e.g., My “safety on the train” story)
- **Practice making predictions** about how others will feel or act when given various social situations (e.g., if someone learned their friend was moving, if someone got accepted to their dream college, etc.)
- **For taking turns and sharing**, use a timer, starting with a short duration of time and slowly increase the time as you see success
- **Schedule play dates with peers** and provide feedback and positive reinforcement for appropriate responses (e.g., “I love how you are sharing your toys!”)

Language/Communication

- **If the child is pre-verbal**, try using a voice output device or picture cards that represent desired items for your child to request and to decrease frustration.
- **If your child is beginning to use vocal speech**, encourage language by requiring those vocal words or approximations every time they request something. Consider creating multiple opportunities per day for requesting (e.g., try to resist anticipating when your child wants a snack and encourage requesting)
- **Break instructions down**, starting with 1-step, and use visuals to facilitate responding and memory
- **Review figures of speech** and talk about the concept of jokes to expand literal thinking
- **Teach concepts receptively** and expressively to solidify understanding (receptively- “Touch the calculator.” Expressively- “What’s this called?” while pointing to the calculator)



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Behavior

Please note, severe behaviors may warrant a functional behavior assessment. The following are general suggestions.

- **Determine the function** (the “why”) of the behavior (e.g., is this behavior for attention, to get something, to avoid/escape something, or for sensory reasons) by collecting ABC (antecedent-behavior-consequence) data: what happened before, what the behavior looked like, and what happened after. This will help determine patterns and create more effective/appropriate strategies
- **Consider using positive reinforcement** to teach appropriate replacement behaviors (e.g., only give more snacks when your child requests using manners instead of yelling or whining for more)
- **Set your child up for success.** Determine the most effective approach to positive reinforcement of appropriate behaviors based on your child’s age, motivation, and frequency of the behavior (e.g., if your child is forgetting to turn in homework daily, you can start reinforcing an increase in turn-ins over time as opposed to immediately expecting 3 weeks of turn-ins in order to earn a beach trip)
- **Consider “First-then” statements** (e.g., “First homework, then video games”) to increase compliance

- **Consider countdowns and visual or verbal reminders** to prepare your child for transitions. You may need to start with transitioning from preferred to preferred tasks and then target moving from preferred to non-preferred tasks
- **Allow your child to make choices** about their day to help build self-advocacy and reduce frustration

Helpful Resources

<http://www.autism-society.org/>

[The ASD Workbook: Understanding Your Autism Spectrum Disorder by Penny Kershaw](#)

Need more ideas or help?

Schedule a teleconsultation with RethinkCare’s behavior experts today!

*Note: every child with autism is different and this list serves as a sampling of tips

