

# How ASD can influence learning

Tear out  
and keep as  
a handy  
reference

## CHALLENGES

Will vary from student to student but often include:

- ▶ sensory regulation
- ▶ settling into learning
- ▶ coping with change, unfamiliar routines and a lack of structure
- ▶ verbal communication
- ▶ processing, receiving and making sense of things
- ▶ expressing information and ideas
- ▶ social interaction
- ▶ abstract thinking and processing complex information.

## STRENGTHS

Will vary from student to student but often include:

- ▶ honesty
- ▶ processing visual information quickly
- ▶ special interest in particular topics and/or activities
- ▶ strong rote memory
- ▶ strong preference for well-planned, structured, routine-based learning environments
- ▶ retaining particular facts and details.

## TEACHING OPPORTUNITIES



### Adjust the classroom environment

- ▶ Provide students with a clear structure for each day, each lesson and the tasks ahead.
- ▶ Use visual timetables and daily organisers.
- ▶ Break units of time into mini-schedules (visual or written).
- ▶ Consider a student's sensory needs when you position them in the classroom.
- ▶ Present information that will help students settle in and learn visually.
- ▶ Set up a quiet space that students find calming.



### Present curriculum content in different ways

- ▶ Use visual resources, particularly video, to help comprehension and skill development.
- ▶ Write information in plain language.
- ▶ Provide a list or map of the main ideas in a lesson.
- ▶ Cue key points in information by underlining, highlighting and pointing.
- ▶ Use post-it notes to mark relevant sections in text or handouts.
- ▶ Explain and teach social skills and the rules of social convention.
- ▶ Use video and peer group learning to teach social skills.
- ▶ Pre-teach key concepts of a new topic or activity.



### Use technology and equipment

- ▶ Use visual timers.
- ▶ Encourage students to use digital tools to present their ideas.
- ▶ Encourage the use of graphic organising software and tools.
- ▶ Use objects that are interesting and calming.
- ▶ Allow students to use noise-cancelling headphones or ear plugs at noisy times.



### Stimulate interest and motivation

- ▶ Include regular movement breaks.
- ▶ Use a student's interests and skills to support learning.
- ▶ Allow access to a favourite sensory object to support focus and concentration.
- ▶ Draw on real-life experience and specific interests.
- ▶ Encourage students to complete a task in their preferred mode and to use visual aids such as photos, video, pictures or objects in their communication.
- ▶ Identify what a student finds stressful and what they find calming and use this in your planning.

### AVOID

- ▶ Overwhelming students with too much talk: keep your verbal instructions simple and clear, slow down your speech and use short sentences.
- ▶ Rushing students. Instead provide extra time to process and complete tasks.
- ▶ Combinations of unexpected changes, stressful environments, new tasks and new people. Plan for changes in regular routines in advance.
- ▶ Escalating the situation when things go wrong.
- ▶ Sarcasm and metaphorical language.