



Autism Appropriate Environment Checklist

The main thing to consider is flexibility – some people will be sensory seekers and some sensory avoiders so the ability to adjust as necessary is key. Not every recommendation will be needed for every autistic person, and we advise discussing the environment with the autistic person. This checklist is designed to be used anywhere – the home, school, work, or any other environment. For more individualised checklist, please contact us with your requirements.

Noise and Sounds

Most autistic people have trouble filtering out different sounds and focussing on the ones that are the most important. Many autistic people process all the noises they hear. This takes a lot of energy. While ensuring that unnecessary noises are avoided, the opportunity for increasing auditory input is important to access for those who may seek noise as well.

Good Practice	Current situation	Action if necessary
Unnecessary noise is eliminated • Doors closed to minimise noise from other rooms • Windows closed to minimise noise from outdoors		



• Windows soundproofed where possible and necessary (i.e., when building is near busy road) • Electrical devices switched off when not in use to avoid hum		
Reduce noises when rooms are being used: • Non patterned carpets or rugs used to muffle noise made by furniture moving and people • Acoustics in gym, hall and any other large areas checked and where possible modified to lessen echo		



Agreed strategies in place for when noise becomes too much • Ear defenders available • Noise cancelling headphones available • Ability to listen to music or white noise on headphones as necessary • Quiet room available for access		
Advance notice given where possible for loud noises e.g., scheduled fire drill		



Visual

This is one area where people may seek sensory input at times and avoid it at others.

Area is well lit • Bright but not too bright. Dimmer switches are ideal • Fluorescent lights regularly checked to avoid flickering • Covering put over lighting so it is less “sharp” if necessary • Allow sunglasses to be worn inside if necessary/preferable		
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Orderly environment • Avoid bright contrasting primary colours. These can appear to “shout” at people. • Organised wall displays – not too cluttered • Autistic people allowed to access area with minimal visual distraction for working if desired • Important information clearly displayed		
Avoid patterns on carpets and rugs if necessary. Some autistic people will like them, but some may find them difficult to tolerate.		



Items available for sensory seekers • Liquid timers • Sand timers • Desk toys • Visual apps on tablets (e.g., lava lamps, slime apps, visual stim videos of waterfalls, plants growing in time elapsed videos etc)		
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Smell

Some autistic people are aware of smells but they don't necessarily register as good or bad smells. Some smell everything very vividly. Some smells can be very difficult for some autistic people. Chemical or man-made smells can often be the ones which cause most difficulties but this is not always the case. Also note that some traditionally soothing smells e.g., lavender, are not universally relaxing for all. It is always best to check with the autistic people using the environment what the sensitivities may or may not be.

Keep environmental smells to a minimum. • Glue, paint, cleaning stuffs etc to be non scented where possible • Staff/family aware that smell may be an issue (this does not mean they cannot wear perfume, aftershave, deodorant etc, but be aware that it may provoke a reaction from autists) • Staff aware autistic people may react to smells of others		
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Keep other smells monitored and reduced where possible • Allow autistic people use of the accessible toilets • Be aware of any difficulty some autistic people may have near kitchens while food is being prepped		
For sensory seekers, allow scented stationary or aromatherapy oils, and ensure sensory avoiders are not seated next to them.		



Touch and feel

This is another area where autistic people vary greatly. Some love touch, some cannot bear to be touched. Sometimes light touch is acceptable, but some may prefer a firmer touch. Our sensitivity to touch can vary even over a day.

Flexibility with uniform

- Be aware seams and labels on clothing can be difficult. Clothing may be able to be identified by lack of label as well as name on label
- A formal shirt may look smart but if the autistic person is overly uncomfortable, a polo shirt with a collar may be acceptable.
- Clip on ties or loosely tied ones may be easier



Comfortable work area

- Seating that is comfortable and gives appropriate sensory feedback (wobble cushions may be good for those who are sensory seekers)
- Bean bags or other soft options in library/quiet area
- Blanket or other comfort/fidget items available as necessary.
- Allow fidget items to aid concentration.



Be aware that fine motor skills may be difficult for some autistic people

- Pencil grips available
- People able to type work on computer or tablet as opposed to write
- Adaptive scissors made available



Ensuring autistic people are supported

Even with all sensory needs catered to, an autistic person's confidence that they are understood and respected may need bolstered and maintained. Many autistic adults report being told they were too sensitive as children. The following will help guide you to ensuring the autistic person's well being is respected too.

Autist feels sensory needs are respected: • knows they can discuss their concerns with staff/line manager • is confident their concerns will be taken seriously, and action will be taken promptly when necessary • All staff treat the autistic person with respect and are aware of any sensory considerations.		
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Autistic person feels relaxed in environment: • Has the option to take breaks at times other than colleagues if needed		
Autistic person is well supported with their work • can take sensory breaks/follow a sensory diet as necessary		



Autistic person knows of changes

- Any changes to staffing in advance
- People should ideally be allowed to remain in the same desk but if a change needs planned, sufficient notice is given
- Avoid hot desking



Sensory overload/sensory seeking is respected

- Clear system in place for when the autistic person needs to withdraw from sensory input
- Clear system in place for when the autistic person needs to sensory seek (e.g., using desk toy, listen to music on headphones)
- aware that both sensory seeking and avoiding are ways autistic people self regulate emotions, deal with stress and cope with demands placed on them