

Autism Friendly Classroom Strategies and Learning Supports

What	How	Why
Visual images	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photos, video, diagram, schedule, table 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a snapshot of information that plays to autism strengths • Supports the acquisition of knowledge delivered via auditory and social means (narration, discussion, group activity) which can be challenging for students with ASD
Humour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Known characters and established humour preferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps to build relationships and connections through shared laughter and enjoyable experience • Encourages thinking strategies. (Why do people find this funny?) • Supports engagement with the task
Minimal content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-2 sentences at a time • Use of key words and phrases • Dot Points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces the need for processing demands on working memory • Reduces the risk of overwhelming sensory input.
Repetition and Familiarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same background/ layout/ heading/ font style • Repetition of phrases and links to information between slides • Known guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds trust, confidence and predictability. • Predictability supports self-regulation of emotion and reduces anxiety • Reduction of anxiety factors enables greater cognitive capacity
Checklists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concise words/pictures • Order of tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draws attention/focus to task in hand • Encourages planning • Promotes independence
Highlighting Key Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing content • Using bold/underlined /enlarged fonts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draws attention to main ideas which can create a framework for understanding even if some of the other information is lost. • Supports location of information
Numbering Pages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent location, bottom right, large and clear without being dominant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a reference point • Supports a sense of order • Enables 'checkable' content. (There is the number – all is well.)
Colour Coding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Books and materials • Separation of information and activities • Organisation/behaviour prompts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a visual reference point • Separates visual content in an ordered manner • Creates a predictable system which supports understanding.
Pre-established routines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Regular activity) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular activity with predictable procedures but changing content. • Stretches the student to accept some change within a well-known framework of operation. (Exposure to regulated stress)
Frequent change of activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking activities with content but chunking down into brief steps and stages that involve a variety of learning skills and abilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables planning for challenging tasks within a series of achievable independent tasks. • Sets up opportunities for diversion and distraction if anxiety is noticed • Enables opportunities to allow additional time on preferred style of learning if deemed appropriate at the time

What	How	Why
Real examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photo images rather than clip art • Video footage of familiar people • Actual examples of student issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports the credibility of information • Ensures less reasons for objecting due to falsities somewhere • Believable links to current reality support the acceptance of new learning
Prior personal experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion examples • Creating lists of personal knowledge and memories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grounds the learning as relevant • Provides a glimpse into preferences and priorities • Creates opportunities to extend current knowledge
Quotes & Mnemonics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking 'Pearls of Wisdom' to current learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a memory marker • When solid connections are made to a mnemonic, the link is likely to be quite strong and enduring
Progress tracking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Checklist • Journal/diary entries • Charts • Visual records 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicates 'how far', 'how much longer', 'how many more' • Supports endurance. If the end is in sight I can last a bit longer • Provides information about what has been done and what is coming up.
Frequent/flexible change of focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Random rotation through different learning styles and approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeps expectations achievable • Enables success when engagement is tentative. • Allows for minimal physical productivity by mixing written, verbal and thinking activities. • Challenge can be increased over time within the zone of proximal development • Plays to the strengths of the individual
Supporting connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagrams of text box information with arrows indicating how they are linked. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central coherence difficulties can make it hard for students with ASD to make connections between the details and the bigger picture. Directional arrows provide additional information to support this understanding.
Close proximity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher mobility • Predicting need and moving closer to student • 'Up close and personal' conversations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improves scanning and observation opportunities • Allows brief and discreet one-on-one support of individuals, providing prompting and feedback as required
Selective attendance aka strategic ignoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing a behaviour to cease without drawing attention to it • Ignoring inappropriate behaviour that is not disruptive or unsafe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables a clearer assessment of the motivation for the behaviour through observation of what naturally brings the behaviour to a close • Some unusual behaviour actually supports concentration and readiness to learn. (e.g. Jiggling feet, peripheral viewing, rocking) • May appear to be off task when really just processing information in a different manner
Distraction/Diversion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shifting attention to object of interest • Breaking focus by interjecting an unexpected activity, noise or visual distractor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps to avoid an escalation of anxiety • Assists in cessation of an activity • Aids engagement in a new task by moving attention from one event to another.
Affirmation/Acknowledgement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name the behaviour observed – doesn't always have to be the ASD student Eg: Good listening, clever thinking, great sitting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restates the desired behaviour using the group • Acknowledges effort • Builds on the positive
Use of Timer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicates end of an activity • Provides time restrictions around a non-preferred task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removes the need for a social redirection from teacher • Gives a predictable end to undesirable activities