

Handout 1—Creating a supportive classroom environment

Below are some tips to share with teachers, child care providers, and others that work with a child with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Emphasize the importance of teamwork.

Emphasize that, although each student is an individual, every student is a member of the larger classroom team and needs to work together.

Structure the classroom in a simple, logical way.

Designate one section of the room for reading stories, one for doing math, another for science. It can help children with ASD to have consistent structure to their classroom.

Create a Quiet Corner

Create a quiet corner or space in the classroom for anyone who needs a break from an activity. A few chairs and/or a table placed away from the main hub of activity can provide all children, especially children with ASD, a quiet space to regroup if they become overwhelmed.

Create a Daily Schedule

Create a daily schedule to share with children about the day's activities. Children with ASD who have trouble transitioning between activities find a structured schedule helpful. Children with ASD tend to be more visual learners, so consider creating a visual or picture schedule.

Give advance notice

When a special event is planned, give as much advance notice as possible. Children with ASD tend to have difficulty with changes in routine and can be more successful when they have time to prepare.

Adjust sensory stimuli

Children with ASD are often sensitive to environmental stimuli like sights, sounds, tastes, and smells. Try keeping the lights low, playing soothing background music, or providing headphones as a way to minimize stress.