Characteristics of Autism Can Include:

* trouble using and understanding language or certain aspects of language such as sarcasm, expressions, and body language.
* difficulty taking in sensory input in an ordinary way. For example, a vacuum cleaner may sound overly loud, a smell may be extra strong, or the feel of something may be extra itchy.
* a need for a particular routine so they know what to expect as they can become frustrated when things don’t go the way they had expected.
* trouble recognizing another person’s opinion or understanding another person’s feelings.
* difficulty working on or participating in activities with no clear ending (e.g., an open ended writing activity, a class lecture)
* difficulty switching from one activity to another, especially if they have to switch from something enjoyable to something not enjoyable (I think everyone can relate to that).
* difficulty organizing themselves in productive play when not directed or given specific instructions.

Sometimes these characteristics lead to problem behaviors at home, in the classroom, or in the community which can be frustrating for the child and the adults caring for him.

Here are some strategies which can prevent problematic behaviors or promote positive behavioral changes (since every child is different, you may have to try different strategies to see which ones work best with your child/student):[LEARN MORE](https://ibcces.org/blog/2016/07/15/behavior-strategies/#certifications)

15 Behavior Strategies to Help Kids with Autism

1 – Let the child know what will happen next.

For example, “After you finish the puzzle, it is time to brush your teeth”, or “In five minutes it is time to turn off the computer and start your writing assignment.” For some children it is helpful to set a timer so the child can keep track of how much time is left. So in the example above “In five minutes it is time to turn off the computer and start your writing assignment” you would set the timer for five minutes. Some children need reminders as the time is winding down to 2 minutes, 1 minute, etc.

For children who have trouble understanding the concept of time or numbers, a visual timer can be helpful because the child can see how much time is left.

2-Set Expectations, be Consistent, and Follow Through

For example, if you tell your child that you will play a game with him if he plays quietly while you talk on the phone for five minutes, make sure that you keep your end of the bargain (barring unforeseen circumstances).*You may need to give him a choice of what activity to do during that time that you are on the phone.* If your child can’t tell time, set a timer that your child can see, get off the phone in exactly 5 minutes (barring unforeseen consequences), and play the game. If you do this consistently, your child will come to know what is expected and will believe in what you say. As he improves, you can increase the time. Once he learns how to play independently while you talk on the phone, you may be able to fade back on such a rigid set-up, but it is a good starting point to teach him how to act while you talk on the phone. This is one example but can be applied to many scenarios.

If you don’t implement expectations with consistency and follow through on your words, your child will not know what to expect. This can lead to anxiety and challenging behavior (e.g., talking to you while you are on the phone, repeatedly asking when you will be off the phone, etc.). Children with autism or other challenging behaviors thrive on predictability, so do your best to make their world predictable. Another example of predictability would be having a set routine each night (e.g. first homework…then TV or first put pajamas on…then read a story). Keep in mind that difficult behaviors are more likely to come out when things aren’t predictable, and we know we can’t make everything predictable all the time. Just know that if you are doing your best, it is not yours or your child’s fault when things don’t go according to plan. Just get back in the swing of a predictable routine as soon as possible.

3 – Acknowledge your child or students for complying with your requests

For instance, if your child is using a loud voice in the movie theater and you say, “whisper in the theater,” praise the child with a comment such as “nice job whispering”, or “thank you for being respectful in the theater.” For children who understand language well, situations like this are a good time to teach about other people’s perspectives (e.g., “Thank you for whispering. This let’s other people hear the movie.”).

4 – Tell the child specifically what you expect and allow him to earn privileges for complying with your expectations

For instance, if your child often has a tantrum in a store when he can’t go to the toy aisle, tell him exactly what you expect of him before you go to the store and reward him with a privilege for following that expectation. For instance, you can say something like “We are going to Target. We are going to the school supply aisle to buy paper and pens, and then we will pay and go home.” Once in the store you can give reminders (e.g., now we are going to get the paper and pens, now we will go pay, you’re doing a nice job following the rules, now we are going home, etc.).

Let the child know that he can earn a privilege for following the rules. Privilege ideas include getting a sticker of a favorite character, playing a favorite game once at home, watching a favorite show, going on the computer, staying up ten minutes past bed time, etc. Try to think of a privilege that your child might like or ask him what he would like to work towards.

When the child earns the privilege, praise him with specific language. In the example above you could say, “You followed the rules at the Target. We got the paper and pens, paid, and came home. Nice work! Now you can enjoy some computer time.” Make sure the privilege is something the child wants. You can let the child choose what he would like to work for ahead of time. Children also benefit from nonverbal praise such as high fives, smiles, thumbs up, etc.

Side Note: \*Children with difficulty understanding language often respond better to pictures, visual cues, demonstrations or physical prompting than verbal instructions. For example, many children I have worked with with autism walked nicely in the hall after I demonstrated how, rather than after I said “walk nicely.”

5 – Give Choices

All children, including those with autism, like to feel a sense of control over their world. Many children benefit from having the choices limited to two to four options (depending on the child), as they get overwhelmed with too many choices and cannot decide. Examples of choices are: “Do you want to play a board game or watch TV,” “Do you want butter or jelly on your bagel,” “Do you want to wear the green or red shirt?” Again, children with language difficulties often have more success making choices when you show them the options or pictures of the options (e.g., hold up the red and green shirt and let them point to the one they want).

6 – For some children with language difficulties, showing the child the activity or toy that he will be utilizing next is helpful to encourage him to move from one activity to another

For example, if the child is on the computer and you want him to come work on a puzzle, show him the puzzle so he knows what it is you want him to come do.

7 – If possible, use a schedule to let the child know how his day will go

For children who have trouble reading or understanding language, a visual schedule would be best. A schedule for after school could include “eating a snack”, “doing homework”, “watching TV”, “playing a game with the family”, “reading a book”, “taking a bath” and “going to bed.” A visual schedule at school could include “math”, “reading”, “gym”, “lunch”, “recess”, “art”, “science”, “packing up”, and “getting on the bus.” Below is an example of a vi

8 – Allow the child to bring a transitional object from one activity to the next.

For instance, if the child has to leave the classroom to go with a new staff member such as a speech therapist, let him bring a favorite object from the classroom such as a stress ball or toy car. This can assist with helping him feel more comfortable in the unfamiliar surroundings.

9 – Distract and redirect problematic behavior instead of saying “stop” or “no.”

For example, if the child is running in the store, remind him or show him how to walk nicely. If necessary, find something interesting to show him and call his attention to it, rather than focusing on the problematic behavior. If he is running in the hall at school, redirect him back to the line, with a short directive such as, “Come back to your spot in line” or remind him to “walk in the hallway.” For children with trouble understanding language, try demonstrating what is expected or use a gesture, rather than just giving the verbal direction.

10 – If the child seems over stimulated from sensory input, such as in a large crowd, bring him to a quieter place to de-stress.

Be mindful of situations where your child might feel overwhelmed before you take him there (e.g., a fireworks show, a crowded festival, etc.).

There are also strategies to create an environment that helps a child with autism feel less overwhelmed by sensory input.

11 – Make directions clear, short, and concrete.

For example, if your child is throwing food at the table say, “eat your food” rather than “Be good at the table,”  “Don’t throw your food” or “Would you stop with that! You are always throwing your food.” For children with difficulty understanding language, showing them a picture or a visual demonstration of the behavior you want to see, can be helpful.

12 – Take advantage of teachable moments.

For example, If the child snatches a toy from another child, teach him how to use his words to ask for they toy (if he has the language capabilities to do so) rather than reprimanding him for snatching the toy.

13 – When giving tasks, assignments, chores, etc. many children do better if they know when the task will end.

Some examples of activities with a clear ending include puzzles, a specific number of math problems, a specific number of pages to read, a timed event (e.g., the lesson will last ten minutes – set a timer), a specified way to complete a chore such as “Put ten toys in the bin.” or “Spray the window three times and use the paper towel to wipe the spots off,” a specific number of lines to write on the page for a writing assignment, etc. (visually defining the task is helpful as well; for example numbering the paper for a math assignment.

14 – Some children thrive when given structured hands-on or visual activities:

Many children I have worked with or have observed, did very well (sat nicely, worked diligently, etc.) when given a hands-on/visual activity. Examples include playing a computer game, sorting objects by color or object type (for example, putting the silverware away from the dishwasher, sorting laundry by light and dark, putting materials away in the correct boxes, etc.) completing a puzzle, constructing a model car, tracing or coloring in a picture, etc. As another example, some teachers of children with autism teach academic skills through sorting tasks. For instance, an activity about learning colors would require the child to put all the yellow chips in a yellow cup, all the blue chips in a blue cup, etc. Keeping a child focused with an activity they do well at is a great way to encourage calm behavior. However, if the child is feeling overwhelmed or frustrated from the activity, allow a break or a change in the task.

15 – Stay calm when interacting with the child (I know it can be hard at times but make every effort to be as calm as possible).

If you are regularly having trouble staying calm, you may benefit from talking to a friend, family member, or therapist for support. Do not take it out on your child. Yelling and threatening will not make behavior better. It may stop the behavior in the short-term, but the behaviors will occur again. You may actually make the behaviors worse because the child may start to feel anxious, scared, angry, embarrassed, or sad. Children with autism are not choosing to act in a way that is frustrating to you or anyone else. They legitimately need positive support from you to help them meet their emotional/behavioral needs.

Finally, it is important to recognize that some children on the autism spectrum have trouble generalizing expectations across situations, so the same strategies may need to be used in situations that are similar to one another.

Keep in Mind: If you are using these strategies for the first time, you may not see change as quickly as you ‘d like. Your child/student will not be used to your new techniques and may even push harder due to the sudden change in your behavior.



**10 ways to support learners with dyslexia**

by [**Jade Blue**](https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/blog/authors/jade-blue/), 20/04/2021

 [**Teaching**](https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/blog/categories/teaching/) , [**Classroom**](https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/blog/categories/Classroom/) , [**Schools**](https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/blog/categories/schools/)

Cambridge English Qualifications are designed to be accessible to all learners, including those with dyslexia. Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that mainly affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent reading and spelling. Learning difficulties are not related to a person’s intelligence but are caused by differences in the ways the brain processes information. They vary greatly from person to person. Dyslexia mainly affects the development of literacy and language-related skills, and learners with dyslexia are likely to have problems with phonological processing, working memory and processing speed.

**Key terminology**

* **Phonological processing:** using sounds (phonemes) to process spoken and written language.
* **Working memory:** the amount of information that can be held in mind and used in doing tasks.
* **Processing speed:** the pace at which we take in information, make sense of it and begin to respond.

**Developing inclusive and supportive learning environments**

The challenges for learners with dyslexia vary from person to person, so the focus of teaching should be on making the learning environment as inclusive and supportive as possible. Inclusion is, ‘A sense of belonging: feeling respected, valued for who you are; feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment from others so that you can do your best work’ (Miller & Katz 2002).

Here are 10 ways to develop an inclusive learning environment. They include planning inclusive lessons, and carrying out assessment and feedback, to help learners with dyslexia prepare for their Cambridge English Qualification with confidence.

**1. Create a supportive and collaborative classroom culture**

Create a supportive and collaborative classroom culture by getting to know all your learners as individuals and encouraging them to get to know each other. This will help learners feel comfortable thinking about ways to do tasks and asking for support.

**2. Use multisensory input and activities**

Use multisensory input and activities to give learners more than one way to make connections and learn concepts. For example, use flash cards, puppets, story videos and real objects in the classroom. When learners use more than one sense at a time, their brain is stimulated in a variety of ways. Multisensory activities may involve a combination of reading, listening, viewing, touching an object, moving physically around the space, or using gesture.

**3. Offer learners choices**

Offer learners choices in how they engage with tasks to make learning more meaningful and inclusive. For example, learners might ‘draw’ rather than write notes during a listening task or while preparing for a speaking task.

**4. Have L-shaped cards available**

Have L-shaped cards available for learners to frame sections of textbook pages and help focus their attention. Encourage learners to use a plain piece of paper to cover reading texts and reveal one line at a time as they read. These are useful techniques for all learners when you are teaching reading skills.

**5. Present new language in small and manageable chunks**

Present new language in small and manageable chunks so that you don’t overload learners. Focus on key language from the exam wordlists and the language specifications in the teacher handbook.

**6. Spend some time explicitly teaching exam strategies**

Spend some time explicitly teaching exam strategies, such as how to approach particular tasks in the exam, and break these down into a series of simple steps.

**7. Use concept-checking questions**

Use concept-checking questions (CCQs) to check your learners’ understanding of a new word or grammatical item. CCQs are better than just asking ‘Do you understand?’. Example CCQs for the adjective quick might be: ‘What things do you know that are quick?’, ‘What’s the opposite of quick?’ or ‘Are snails quick?’. You could also use pictures of objects or gestures to check your learners’ understanding.

**8. Offer lots of opportunities for learners to recap and review language**

Offer lots of opportunities for learners to recap and review language, especially from the exam wordlists. Use varied techniques to help learners memorise new words, including drawing, music or rhythm, movement, gesture and visualisation techniques.

**9. Try different approaches to giving feedback**

Talk to your learners about what type of feedback works best for them. Remember that hearing the teacher’s voice can feel more personal and supportive than receiving written feedback in red pen, so try making a short video or voice recording with your comments.

**10. Remember that assessment should be ongoing**

Remember that assessment should be ongoing and isn’t the end of the learning process. If you give something back to a learner to correct, make sure you check the next version and then give them feedback on this too. The challenges that learners with dyslexia experience often lead to low levels of confidence, so remember to include positive feedback to encourage learners and build self-esteem. This is of course true for all your learners!

