

Characteristics of autism

By Rocky Point Academy

No one will exhibit all of these characteristics, as each case of autism has its own unique gifts and struggles. This is a list of commonly seen characteristics found on the autism spectrum. This list is provided for educational purposes and not meant to be used for diagnosing autism. Many of these characteristics can also be found in those struggling with ADD/ADHD. Generally, an individual with autism will have struggles in several categories below, not just one.

Social skills

Very little or no eye contact.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Resistance to being held or touched.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Tends to get too close when speaking to someone (lack of personal space).

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Responds to social interactions, but does not initiate them.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Does not generally share observations or experiences with others.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Difficulty understanding jokes, figures of speech or sarcasm.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Difficulty reading facial expressions and body language.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Difficulty understanding the rules of conversation.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Difficulty understanding group interactions.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Aversion to answering questions about themselves.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Gives spontaneous comments which seem to have no connection to the current conversation.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Makes honest, but inappropriate observations.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Seems unable to understand another's feelings.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Prefers to be alone, aloft or overly-friendly.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Difficulty maintaining friendships.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Finds it easier to socialize with people that are older or younger, rather than peers of their own age.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Unaware of/disinterested in what is going on around them.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Talks excessively about one or two topics (dinosaurs, movies, etc.).

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Overly trusting or unable to read the motives behinds peoples' actions.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Minimal acknowledgement of others.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Linguistic/language development

Abnormal use of pitch, intonation, rhythm or stress while speaking.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Speech is abnormally loud or quiet.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Difficulty whispering.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Repeats last words or phrases several times. Makes verbal sounds while listening (echolalia).

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Often uses short, incomplete sentences.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Pronouns are often inappropriately used.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

May have a very high vocabulary.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Uses a person's name excessively when speaking to them ("Mary, we are having lunch. Right, Mary?").

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Speech started very early and then stopped for a period of time.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Difficulty understanding directional terms (front, back, before, after).

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Behaviours

Obsessions with objects, ideas or desires.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Ritualistic or compulsive behaviour patterns (sniffing, licking, watching objects fall, flapping arms, spinning, rocking, humming, tapping, sucking, rubbing clothes).

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Fascination with rotation.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Play is often repetitive.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Many and varied collections.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Unusual attachment to objects.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Quotes movies or video games.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Difficulty transferring skills from one area to another.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Perfectionism in certain areas.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Frustration is expressed in unusual ways.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Feels the need to fix or rearrange things.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Transitioning from one activity to another is difficult.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Difficulty attending to some tasks.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Gross motor skills are developmentally behind peers (riding a bike, skating, running).

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Fine motor skills are developmentally behind peers (hand writing, tying shoes, scissors).

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Inability to perceive potentially dangerous situations.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Extreme fear (phobia) for no apparent reason.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Verbal outbursts.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Unexpected movements (running out into the street).

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Difficulty sensing time (Knowing how long ten minutes is or three days or a week).

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Difficulty waiting for their turn (such as in a line).

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Causes injury to self (biting, banging head).

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Emotions or sensitivities

Sensitivity or lack of sensitivity to sounds, textures (touch), tastes, smells or light.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Difficulty with loud or sudden sounds.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Unusually high or low pain tolerance.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Intolerance to certain food textures, colours or the way they are presented on the plate (one food can't touch another).

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Inappropriate touching of self in public situations.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Desires comfort items (blankets, teddy, rock, string).

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Laughs, cries or throws a tantrum for no apparent reason.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Resists change in the environment (people, places, objects).

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

An emotional incident can determine the mood for the day - emotions can pass very suddenly or are drawn out for a long period of time.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Becomes overwhelmed with too much verbal direction.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Tends to either tune out or break down when being reprimanded.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Calmed by external stimulation - soothing sound, brushing, rotating object, constant pressure (hammock, rolled in a blanket).

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

May need to be left alone to release tension and frustration.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

School-related skills

Exceptionally high skills in some areas and very low in others.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Excellent rote memory in some areas.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Difficulty with reading comprehension (can quote an answer, but unable to predict, summarize or find symbolism).

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Difficulty with fine motor activities (coloring, printing, scissors, gluing).

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Short attention span for most lessons.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Resistance or inability to follow directions.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Difficulty transitioning from one activity to another in school.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Health/movement

Walks on toes.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Unusual gait.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Difficulty changing from one floor surface to another (carpet to wood, sidewalk to grass).

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Odd or unnatural posture (rigid or floppy).

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Difficulty moving through a space (bumps into objects or people).

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Walks without swinging arms freely.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Incontinence of bowel and/or bladder.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Constipation.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Frequent gas (flatulence, burping) or throwing up.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Appearance of hearing problems, but hearing has been checked and is fine.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Seizure activity.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Allergies and food sensitivities.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Irregular sleep patterns.

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

Apparent lack of concern for personal hygiene (hair, teeth, body odours).

Always Usually Sometimes Rarely Never

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