

Classroom Assistance: Pervasive Developmental Disorder (Autism / Asperger's)

What is Autism?

Autism Spectrum Disorder, which includes Asperger's, is a complex developmental disability that causes problems in social interaction and communication; additionally autistic students may display repetitive / stereotyped behaviors or obsessively follow a routine. Students with autism can display a variety of different symptoms. One student may have mild symptoms, while another may have more serious symptoms.

Source: The National Institutes of Health

Suggested Best Practices for Students with Asperger's and/or Autism

- ✓ Allow students to tape record lectures and directions for assignments.
- ✓ Have students connect with a classmate to back up their own lecture notes.
- ✓ Supply the students with outlines of your lecture and/or copies of overheads.
- ✓ Allow additional time for overheads or board work to be copied.
- ✓ Avoid putting too much information on a single page of handouts or overheads. This may be confusing for students.
- ✓ Use demonstrations and "hands-on" experiences as appropriate.
- ✓ Allow for all assignments and course expectations in written and verbal form.
- ✓ Don't use absolute words such as "always" / "never" unless it is exactly what you mean.
- ✓ Supplement oral with written instructions when revising assignments, dates, etc.
- ✓ Use clear directives and set boundaries if...
 - a student invades your space or imposes on your time
 - the student's classroom comments, behaviors or conversational volume become inappropriate

Tips for classroom management when working with students on the Autism Spectrum:

- Structure – Routine – Schedules – Lists
- Use Visual Aids & Be Concrete, whenever possible
- Reduce distractions
- Don't take it personal – Don't sweat the small stuff
- Understand the challenge of transitioning between classes / instructors