



Observation guide

You can use this guide to organise and record observations of a student. It will assist you when discussing observations with the student, their families or caregivers. It may also be helpful in providing some contextual information to school-based support teams.

This document is not a diagnostic tool. Only a qualified medical or clinical practitioner can make a diagnosis of autism.

All students are different. Only complete the sections relevant to your observations of the student.

Student's name:

Observed by:

Date:

Topic 1: Interests

Observe the student's focused interests and knowledge. Where appropriate, embed these interests in learning and social interactions to build engagement, activate language capacities and motivate learning.

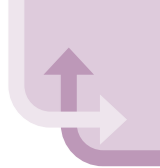
What activities does the student enjoy doing in class?

What group activities does the student enjoy at school?

What topics does the student want to talk about?

What is the student curious about? What do they seek more information on?

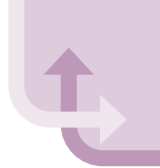
What are the student's favourite things at school?



Topic 2: Social communication

Observe the student's communication, both spontaneous and prompted, with adults and peers at the school. Record whether the student is independent or needs prompts from you to express these behaviours. The emerging communicative behaviours you observe can be developed into communication goals and supports.

Behaviours	Teacher interactions	Peer interactions	Setting of interactions
How does the student respond to their name being called?			
How does the student respond to their teacher's voice?			
How does the student respond to the teacher's questions and directions?			
How does the student respond to social praise from the teacher?			
How does the student respond when receiving tangible rewards?			



Behaviours	Teacher interactions	Peer interactions	Setting of interactions
How does the student initiate interaction with the teacher?			
How does the student request particular classroom activities?			
How does the student ask for objects they want?			
How does the student ask the teacher questions?			
How does the student ask for or show they need help?			



Behaviours	Teacher interactions	Peer interactions	Setting of interactions
How does the student say, ask or show when they have had enough and want to do something else?			
How does the student initiate interaction with peers?			
How does the student respond to peers? (For example, during games, in the playground/classroom.)			
How does the student take turns in a group game or activity?			
How does the student ask the adult or peer to repeat an activity the student really likes?			



Topic 3: Leisure and play

Play is important for developing the student's academic and social learning and offers an avenue through which they make sense of the world. Play activities can be used to support the student's engagement and participation in the classroom and the playground. Play-based group activities can foster social inclusion and can strengthen sibling relationships at home.

<p>What activities does the student enjoy doing in their free time at school?</p>	
<p>How does the student spend their time during recess?</p>	
<p>Who do they prefer to play with during recess?</p>	
<p>What physical games does the student enjoy at school?</p>	
<p>How does the student respond to group games during recess?</p>	
<p>How does the student respond to games involving peers?</p>	



Topic 4: Response to change

Observing the student's responses to change in the learning environment (for example, new teacher, timetable changes, rearrangement of furniture in the classroom) can help you identify strategies to support students with transitions. When observing student responses, it is useful to note positive responses as well and challenges. Consider what may have triggered a particular response, as well as the consequences it generated.

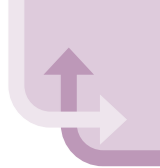
<p>What are the student's favourite routines or specific ways things must be done?</p>	
<p>How does the student move from one activity to another?</p>	
<p>How does the student respond to changes in routine or the environment?</p>	
<p>How does the student respond to new activities?</p>	
<p>How does the student respond to learning new skills?</p>	
<p>How does the student respond to new students joining their group?</p>	

Topic 5: Sensory preferences

Observing the student's sensory preferences can help you choose objects and activities that will be interesting and engaging for the student, especially when they have to learn new skills or join a peer group. Students may respond to some sensory inputs differently; some may avoid sensory input (for example, by reacting to noise), while others may seek out sensory inputs (for example, by stimming). Young students may not be aware of the link between their sensory response and emotions.

Using your knowledge of the student's responses to sensory stimuli to design learning activities can improve the student's on-task concentration and active participation, and can support them to thrive. Your observations will guide your planning for effective multimodal activities that will benefit all students, including autistic students.

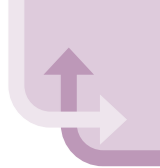
Sensory stimuli	What triggers a response in the student?	How does the student react to this sensory input?	What activities have a calming effect on the student?
Light (for example, direct sunlight)			
Sound or noise levels (for example, increased noise from group activities)			
Spatial layout (for example, space for floor-based activities)			
Touch or texture (for example, handling a familiar toy)			
Smell (for example, room disinfectant)			
Movement (for example, rocking or stimming)			



Topic 6: Communication of emotions

Observing the student's emotional expressions using language and body gestures can help you identify the triggers of their positive and negative feelings and how they communicate their emotions to others. Reflecting on the external causes of the student's emotional behaviour will deepen your understanding of the student and their neurodivergent ways of expressing their feelings.

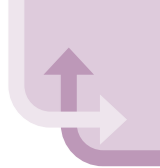
Emotional behaviour	How does the child express this emotion?	When does the student express this emotion?
Excitement		
Frustration		
An aversion to something		
Satisfaction or contentment		



Topic 7: Self-care

Observing the student's self-care skills can help identify strengths and needs in following socially appropriate routines in school areas outside of the classroom. It is important to take notes on the level of support (for example, visual or verbal prompts) the student may require with these routines.

<p>During morning tea or lunchtime, how does the student access their food?</p>	
<p>How does the student respond to instructions to wear a hat or use sunscreen for outdoor activities?</p>	
<p>How does the child respond when their shoelaces or buttons are undone?</p>	
<p>What help does the student need in using the school toilets independently?</p>	
<p>How does the student follow hygiene routines at school?</p>	



Based on your observations, consider strategies that could build a more inclusive learning experience for the student

Strategies	
Interests	
Social communication	
Leisure and play	
Response to change	
Sensory preferences	
Communication of emotions	
Self-care	