

## 70 Tips & Tricks for Educating Students with Aspergers/High-Functioning Autism

Research has identified classroom characteristics that promote success for children with Aspergers and High-Functioning Autism: individualized instruction, interesting curriculum, positive reinforcement, predictability, short working periods, small teacher-to-student ratio, and plenty of structure.

Research has also identified optimal teacher characteristics: consistency, firmness, frequent monitoring of the child's work, humor, knowledge of behavior management strategies for students on the spectrum, patience, personal warmth, and positive academic expectations.

Based on this research, here are 70 quick and simple – yet highly effective – tips and tricks to use in teaching your students who are on the autism spectrum:

1. Allow the child to change seats and places as long as she or he stays on task.
2. Allow the child to chew gum to reduce anxiety if needed.
3. Allow the child to stand or walk with a clipboard (if possible) as long as she or he remains on task.
4. Allow the child to use learning aides, computers, and calculators (for different parts of the task).
5. Allow the student to manipulate an object, doodle, squeeze a ball, bend a pipe cleaner or paper clip, or handle another non-distracting item as long as she or he attends and is on task.
6. Assign a capable "study buddy" who can remind and assist the active or disorganized child.
7. Assign another child to be a "support buddy" who works with the distractible student, and provides one-to-one attention to assist in completing tasks.
8. Assign duties that require self-control (e.g., line leader, materials distributor, etc.). Prepare the student for the duty, encourage the student, and reinforce the student during and after that activity/task.
9. Assign the child to a seat that best allows him or her to observe you while avoiding distractions (e.g., away from doors, windows, pencil sharpeners, etc.).
10. Assign the test grade based on performance on different aspects of the assessment (i.e., organization, writing mechanics, penmanship, subject knowledge displayed, etc.).
11. Be sure you have the student's attention before you start.
12. Develop good rapport with the child. Aspergers students are more likely to respond to emotional connections than contingent consequences.
13. Devise interesting activities.
14. Eliminate excessive noise.
15. Eliminate excessive visual stimuli and clutter that might distract the student.
16. Employ study carrels or seat the child in the area of the class with the least distractions, and/or face the desk toward the wall. However, do not isolate the

student for long periods of time because it may stigmatize the student. Allow the child to engage in group work too.

17. Encourage moms and dads to build physical activity into the student's out-of-school schedule.
18. Ensure that your style of presentation is enthusiastic and interesting.
19. Give a general overview first. Let the child know what will be learned and why it is important in life.
  
20. Give your attention to appropriate behaviors.
21. Have another child place carbon paper under the Aspergers student's paper while writing down homework assignments. Give the carbon copy to the Aspergers child to take home.
22. Have the child progress through the following steps while learning: See it, say it, write it, and do it.
23. Have the child underline or highlight directions.
24. If social rewards/reinforcement is insufficient to bring about the desired behavior, pair social recognition with earned activities or tangible reinforcers.
25. If you get a lot of defiant behavior, review how often you say negative things and give commands to the student. Children who hear too many negatives and commands will shut off the teacher they come from. Get positive, encourage the student, and focus on progress, however small.
26. Ignore as much of the negative behavior as possible.
27. In a multi-part task, provide visual cues that are written on the child's desk or on the chalkboard for each part. The child then engages in that next step.
28. In cooperation with the child, create a "secret cue" (e.g., tugging on your ear lobe, clicking your tongue, saying an odd word such as "huckleberry") that reminds the student to attend.
29. Incorporate movement into lessons.
  
30. Involve the child's interests into assignments.
31. Keep directions and commentary short and to the point. Avoid "overloading" the child with too much verbiage.
32. Keep unstructured time to a minimum.
33. Make a tube that the child uses as a telescope, keeping you in view and blocking out other distractions.
34. Motivate the student by having him or her "race against the clock" to finish the task (or part of it).
35. Move nearer to the child when she or he becomes restless. Offer verbal encouragement or touch. When misbehavior occurs (or threatens to occur), move closer and soften your voice.
36. Place instructions on an audio tape that can be replayed by the child as needed.
37. Play soft background music without lyrics.
38. Present the assignment in parts (e.g., 5 math problems at a time). Give reinforcement for each completed part before giving the next segment of the task, or have the student mark off his or her progress on a chart.

39. Provide "do now" activities for other children while you focus the Aspergers child.
40. Provide a "squeeze ball" for the child to manipulate if he or she becomes frustrated.
41. Provide a bouncy inflatable seat cushion. The child may put his or her energy into squirming on it, but he or she will stay in the seat.
42. Provide a grown-up to whom the child reports at the beginning and end of the day to organize his or her work and assure assignments are in-hand.
43. Provide a laptop computer to children who lose papers (but not books).
44. Provide a second set of textbooks for the forgetful child to use at home.
45. Provide a special "transition object" (e.g., puppet, small stuffed animal, etc.) that accompanies the child to other classrooms, providing a sense of consistency and support.
46. Provide an individualized written schedule to which the child can refer.
47. Provide extended time to finish.
48. Provide opportunities for physical movement (e.g., erasing the blackboard, running errands, distributing and collecting materials, etc.), and build physical activities into the daily schedule.
49. Provide some choice or variation in assignments to maintain the child's attention.
50. Reduce the length of assignments so that child does not lose interest.
51. Repeat and simplify the directions.
52. Seat the child next to appropriate models.
53. Set expectations for behavior BEFORE an activity or event.
54. Set up routines that prepare the student for upcoming transitions.
55. Teach memory techniques and study strategies.
56. To block out distractions on a page, create a "window" in a piece of card board that exposes only one or two lines of print.
57. To ensure understanding, have the child repeat the directions in his or her own words.
58. To gain the attention of younger "Aspies," give directions through a puppet.
59. To increase reflection and concentration, have the child identify the correct answer AND cross out incorrect answers on multiple choice tests. Inform the child that there may be more than one correct answer.
60. Use a clock to remind the impatient student that the next activity must wait until a certain time.
61. Use alert cues to get the child's attention before giving directions.
62. Use color and highlighting to accentuate certain important words or phrases on worksheets.
63. Use concrete objects to assist in keeping the child's attention.
64. Use examples that capitalize on the child's interests.
65. Use game formats to teach and/or reinforce concepts and material.

66. Use more than one modality when giving directions. Supplement verbal instructions with visual ones.
67. Use oral testing if that format will keep the child's attention and better assess his or her knowledge.
68. Use pantomime to capture the attention of the child to give instructions.
69. Use performance testing. Have the child do something or make something.
  
70. Use progress charts and other visual records of behavior to encourage more appropriate behavior. Use colorful charts and cards to motivate the student and recognize effort.