



Advice from Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder to Teachers Regarding Literacy Instruction

Contributed By [Beverly Vicker](#)

Last year a research study was conducted that involved interviews with twelve adults on the autism spectrum. The participants provided wonderful insight into their own development of literacy skills, their present habits and challenges, and suggestions for teachers of students with ASD.

The adults in the study varied in terms of their histories, school experiences, and present reading habits. The following suggestions were offered by one or more of the participants and do not represent group consensus. Suggestions were provided in response to an open ended question about what he or she would like to suggest to teachers to help current students with literacy development. Some suggestions might be easier to implement than others. The adults in the study offered the following advice:

- Capitalize on the student's interest in order to build motivation to read.
- Provide one on one instruction as much as possible.
- Provide rules for grammar, spelling, narrative construction and so forth, when possible, since individuals with ASD prefer concrete directions.
- Remember that although many students with ASD are visual learners, some students are primarily auditory learners.
- Help students understand that their role is not to amass massive amounts of information but to be able to use the information outside of school.
- Present the same information over and over in a variety of ways.
- Don't pack lots of detail into each sentence when providing instruction.
- Provide a physically and emotionally safe learning environment to facilitate learning.
- Have patience and allow enough time for the person with ASD to read and re-read materials if necessary before reflecting on content.
- Use more visual supports which should benefit everyone and not just the person with ASD.
- Teach the student to make a visual aid that will help him or her better remember or understand information related to fiction and non-fiction reading assignments; a chart listing information about the main characters is an example of an aid for fictional material.
- Explain the underlying content structure of what one is to read for both fiction and non-fiction.
- Use positive and supportive language for feedback and encouragement.

The varied suggestions represent reflections based on each participant's personal experience. Some individuals had more difficulty with learning to read than others. All of the subjects were over 21 years of age and therefore had experienced schooling in an era that was devoid of No Child Left Behind, an extensive awareness of learning styles, differentiated instruction, a national interest in literacy, and extensive awareness of autism spectrum disorders. Hopefully, their suggestions or comments will appear helpful to the current generation of teachers.

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