



10 Do's for Supporting Individuals with ASD

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❑ **Do** limit verbal instruction and supplement with visual strategies – Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) generally have strengths in visual processing; verbal information can be difficult for them to process. Use visual supports, modeling, and physical prompts to help ensure understanding.

❑ **Do** prepare ahead for transitions – Individuals with ASD often have difficulty adjusting to changes and tend to be more successful when they are given time to prepare for transitions and supports are used during transitions. Consider using visual schedules, timers, and other cues both to let the individual know a transition is coming as well as to let him/her know what to expect after the transition.

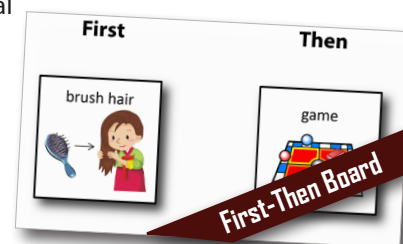
<input type="checkbox"/>	Choose Job	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Break	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fine Motor	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Art	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Computer	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Work with Teacher	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Game	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Snack	

❑ **Do** realize that behavior is a form of communication – Individuals with ASD often have difficulty using communication in a functional way. Even verbal individuals can struggle to use their words in times of stress or anxiety. Remember that negative behavior is often an attempt to communicate needs and desires rather than a personal attack on others.

❑ **Do** use concrete language – Individuals with ASD often have difficulty understanding figures of speech, analogies, sarcasm and exaggerations. Be careful to say exactly what you mean, as your words may be taken literally.

❑ **Do** use simple sentences – Be clear and concise. Long sentences require longer processing time, and individuals with an ASD often have difficulty processing verbal information. Use short, simple sentences.

❑ **Do** try to build on successes – Whenever new skills are being taught, it is important to build on the individual's strengths. If the individual is learning to get dressed, expect him or her initially to do only one step of the dressing process and then slowly add in steps as he or she becomes ready. If the individual is struggling with an assignment, break it into smaller pieces and add in supports to ensure success. Always try to end activities with a success.



❑ **Do** remember that behavior problems are not part of the diagnosis - Common behavior problems such as noncompliance, aggression, and tantrums should be addressed and not simply accepted as part of the child's diagnosis. Interventions are used for specific behaviors and not for the overall diagnosis.

❑ **Do** use rewards and reinforcers – Most neurotypical individuals learn new skills or stop inappropriate behaviors because of social reinforcement (the desire for acceptance from

Things to do	Finished
Breakfast	
Medication	
Reading	
Get dressed	
Brush teeth	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shoes and socks	<input type="checkbox"/>
School bag	<input type="checkbox"/>



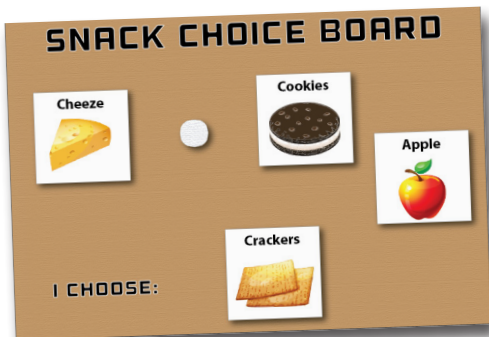
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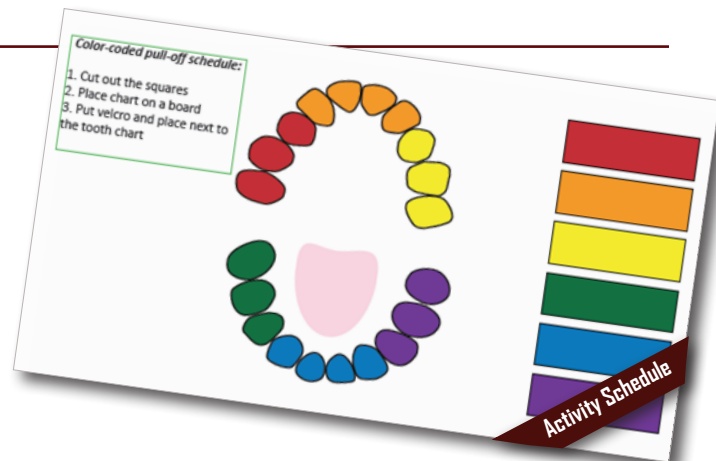
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others). Individuals with ASD are not typically motivated by social reinforcers, thus, it may be necessary to build in other, more concrete rewards for learning new tasks or engaging in appropriate behaviors. Be sure to use rewards that are actually motivating to the individual!

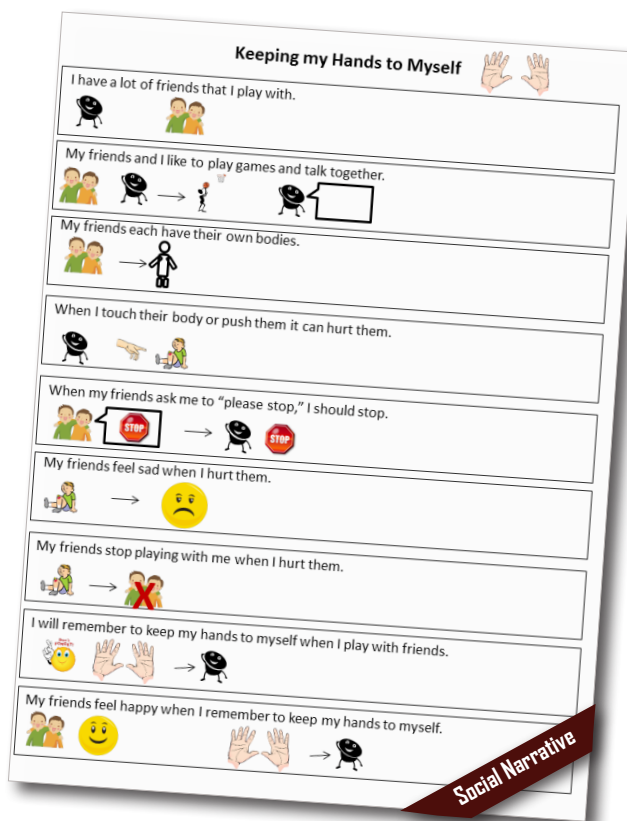
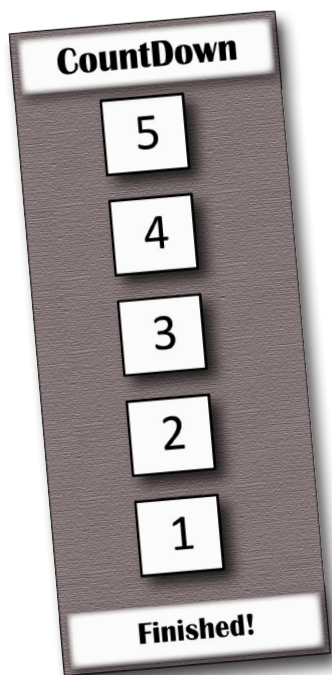
❏ **Do** allow choices when possible – All individuals become frustrated when they feel a lack of control. Determine situations in which the individual can make a choice (even if you determine the choices). Only offer choices that can be enforced. When choices are not available, be sure



not to offer them. When it is NOT time to make a choice, be sure not to offer choices. Do not ask questions (e.g., Can you come do your homework now?) when "no" is not an acceptable answer.



❏ **Do** avoid setting expectations too low or too high - Individuals with ASD are very capable of learning and making gains. Although skills that may come naturally to neurotypical individuals may need to be specifically taught to those with ASD, skills can be learned. Keep in mind that goals should be realistic and skills may need to be broken into smaller pieces to be taught successfully.



Access visual support templates & How-To videos at HANDSinAutism.iupui.edu

Help us bring supports for individuals with ASD to your community! We greatly appreciate any and all donations that allow us to provide information, training, and resources to individuals, families, and caregivers in your community. All donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law and you will be provided with the necessary documentation of 501(c) tax exemption status (HANDSinAutism.iupui.edu/donatehands.html) For further information, contact us at hands@iupui.edu.