

How To Be a Friend to Someone With Autism

- **Take the Initiative to Include Him or Her** - Your friend may desperately want to be included and may not know how to ask. Be specific about what you want him to do.
- **Find Common Interests** - It will be much easier to talk about or share something you both like to do (movies, sports, music, books, TV shows, etc.).
- **Be Persistent and Patient** - Remember that your friend with autism may take more time to respond than other people. It doesn't necessarily mean he or she isn't interested.
- **Communicate Clearly** - Speak at a reasonable speed and volume. It might be helpful to use short sentences. Use gestures, pictures, and facial expressions to help communicate. Speak literally – do not use confusing figures of speech (He may truthfully tell you, “the sky” if you ask “What’s up?”)
- **Stand Up For Him or Her** - If you see someone teasing or bullying a friend with autism, take a stand and tell the person that it's not cool.
- **Remember Sensory Sensitivity** - Your friend may be very uncomfortable in certain situations or places (crowds, noisy areas, etc.). Ask if he or she is OK. Sometimes your friend may need a break.
- **Give Feedback** - If your friend with autism is doing something inappropriate, it's OK to tell him nicely. Just be sure to also tell him what the right thing to do is because he may not know.
- **Don't Be Afraid** - Your friend is just a kid like you who needs a little help. Accept his or her differences and respect strengths just as you would for any friend.

Adapted, Peter Faustino

