



USING A CARE BINDER TO STAY ORGANIZED

Parents: In caring for your child with special health needs, you may get information and paperwork from many sources. A Care Binder can help you organize the most important information in a central place and share key information with members of your child's care team.

Young adults: You may get information and paperwork from many sources related to your health and care. A Care Binder can help you organize the most important information in a central place and share key information with members of your healthcare team.

At the end of this article is a link to where you can download Care page templates. Look through the pages and print those that you think will be helpful.

What is a Care Binder?

A Care Binder is an organizing tool for families who have children with special health care needs. Use a Care Binder to keep track of important information about your child's health and care.

How can a Care Binder help me?

In caring for your child with special health needs, you may get information and paperwork from many sources. A Care Binder helps you organize the most important information in a central place. A Care Binder makes it easier for you to find and share key information with others who are part of your child's care team.

Use your Care Binder to:

- Track changes in your child's medicines or treatments
- List telephone numbers for health care providers and community organizations

- Prepare for appointments
- File information about your child's health history
- Share new information with your child's primary doctor, school nurse, daycare staff, and others caring for your child

What are some helpful hints for using my child's Care Binder?

- Store the Care Binder where it is easy to find. This helps you and anyone who needs information in your absence.
- Add new information to the Care Binder whenever there is a change in your child's treatment.
- Consider taking the Care Binder with you to appointments and hospital visits so that information you need will be close at hand.

How do I set up my child's Care Binder?

Step 1: Gather information you already have.

- Gather up any health information you already have about your child. This may include reports from recent doctor's visits, immunization records, recent discharge summary of a hospital stay, this year's school plan, test results, or informational pamphlets.

Step 2: Look through the pages of the Care Binder.

- Which of these pages could help you keep track of information about your child's health or care?
- Choose the pages you like. Print copies of any you think you will use. They are on the www.chop.edu internet site. Type in Care Binder.

Step 3: Decide which information about your child is most important to keep in the Care Binder.

- What information do you look up often?
- What information is needed by others caring for your child?
- Consider storing other information in a file drawer or box where you can find it if needed.

Step 4: Put the Care Binder together.

- Everyone has a different way of organizing information. The only important

thing is to make it easy for you to find again. We put together the supplies you need to get started.

- Ask for help from your health care providers.

[Click here](#) to download templates of Care pages that may be useful for you.

Related Articles:

- [All These Appointments! All This Paperwork! How to Stay Organized](#)
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HOW TO BE A GOOD PARENT ADVOCATE

All parents naturally want to be good advocates for their children. There are a few steps you can take to help you be more effective.

Know your child

- Be able to communicate your child's strengths and weaknesses. This is important in evaluation and Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) meetings, but it is also helpful in everyday interactions with teachers, therapists, and staff.
- Understand your child's diagnosis and how it affects him or her. How is your child like or unlike what is the norm for other children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)? What are your child's special interests and how might they interfere with or support learning? Does your child avoid social contact or does he or she struggle to know how to initiate or maintain an interaction?
- Know what others have said about your child, including medical professionals and educators.

Know the law

- Make sure you know the special education timelines for your child and monitor them to make sure that they are being followed. When should your annual IEP/IFSP occur? How long until your child's next evaluation? Have you discussed ESY (Extended School Year) in time to get a placement for summer (for students over age 3)? When are important papers due (for

example, the NOREP – Notice of Recommended Educational Placement)?

- Understand the concepts of FAPE (Free and Appropriate Public Education) and LRE (Least Restrictive Environment). Understand other legal constraints, such as: How can a child with an IEP be disciplined? How many students can be in an autism support classroom? Is an aide allowed to provide academic instruction?
- Exercise your right to be a member of your child’s team. Contribute to the evaluation and the IEP/IFSP.
- Recognize that special education is broader than academics. Your child may be entitled to services related to social, behavior, communication, motor skills, and self-help skills as well, just to name a few.
- Understand your options if you are unsatisfied with your child’s special education evaluation or program or if legal procedures and timelines have not been followed.

Know your community

- Stay informed about what is happening at your child’s school, at other schools within your district, and in other neighboring districts.
- Join your school’s parent organization and any disability support groups in your community. These organizations may provide valuable information about what services are being offered to other students, new special education programs in the area, and information about teachers who are “autism-friendly” (and those who are not).
- Learn the chain of command at your Early Intervention (EI) agency, school, and/or school district. Who can you go to if you need help resolving a problem? Who is the special education director in the district? The superintendent? Who is on the school board and when do they hold open meetings?
- Know the resources available in your community. Attend local conferences and workshops to learn about ASD, special education, and ways to help your child.

Be courteous and respectful

- Being a good advocate doesn’t necessarily mean being adversarial! While you may have a different opinion than someone else about what is appropriate for your child, try hard to communicate your opinions in a

professional manner and with facts and data that will support your opinions.

- Make sure to thank teachers, therapists, and staff when good things happen; don't let problems be the only time you communicate. Forming a good relationship with school personnel can often be a way to learn valuable information and can be an additional motivator for teachers, therapists, and staff to want to help your child.

Stay organized and prepared

- The longer your child is in the special education system, the more paperwork you will accumulate. Keep a binder with all materials (for example, evaluations, IEPs/IFSPs, written requests, progress reports, report cards, emails, and letters).
- When you have phone calls or in person conversations related to your child's IEP/IFSP, document what is discussed through an email and keep it in your binder as well. If an email seems unnecessary, write down what is said, who says it, and when, and put the note in your binder.
- During IEP/IFSP or other important meetings, take notes (or have a friend take notes). Keep your notes in your binder.
- Set reminders for important events, such as when progress reports on IEP/IFSP goals are due, when the annual IEP/IFSP should occur, and when ESY should be discussed.
- Set several times a year (perhaps coinciding with IEP/IFSP progress reports) when you will review your child's IEP/IFSP on your own.

Show up to meetings ready to contribute

- Know what kind of meeting you are attending, who will be there, and what will be discussed. If you are unsure, ask your school or Service Coordinator. Some meetings (for example, IEP meetings) require the school to give you notice of the purpose of the meeting and who will attend. Refer to the notice document for information when available.
- Ask for an agenda or outline of what will be discussed ahead of time. If you requested the meeting, prioritize what you want to discuss, and provide the school or your Service Coordinator with your agenda. For IEP/IFSP meetings, consider requesting an IEP/IFSP facilitator to help keep the meeting on track if your team has a history of unproductive meetings.

- Come prepared. Review any relevant documents ahead of time. For IEP/IFSP meetings, think about whether your child has been making progress with the current program. Make a list of what you think is working and what needs to be adjusted. Request a copy of the draft IEP/IFSP if your school or EI agency plans to bring one to the meeting, and review it ahead of time.
- Be on time for meetings, and respect reasonable time limits. Remember, most meetings don't have to be completed in one session, and most meetings don't require you to make an on-the-spot decision.
- Don't take a back seat at the meeting! Sit across from the person running the meeting and make appropriate eye contact with them and anyone else who is speaking. Don't be afraid to speak up when you have something to contribute or have questions.
- If you are meeting to discuss a problem, think in advance about possible solutions. Before attending the meeting, discuss options with trusted family, friends, and professionals who work with your child outside of the education system.
- Bring any supporting documents that may be helpful, such as your child's communication notebook, report cards, or a private evaluation.
- If you are uneasy about attending the meeting alone, consider bringing a therapist who works with your child, another professional who knows your child, a friend, or an advocate along with you.
- If you need to take a break during a meeting, ask for one. It is normal to get emotional about decisions related to your child. A break can help you get your emotions (whether anger or sadness) in check and can make the rest of the meeting more productive.

Follow up after meetings

- Request a summary of each meeting and attendance list, or prepare one yourself and circulate to other people who were there.
- If not everything is accomplished in one meeting, make a list of what was accomplished and what still needs to be done. Schedule the next meeting.
- Review your notes and follow up after a reasonable period of time to ask if things which have been promised have occurred.
- Hold yourself accountable to deadlines as well. If you promised to complete a questionnaire about your child, send in a medical evaluation, or

provide another piece of information, do so promptly.

- Take time to think about what is discussed before agreeing or disagreeing with any proposal. After a reasonable time to think and consult with your family and with any professionals who are working with your child outside of the education setting, get back to the school or EI agency with questions or a decision.
- Had a bad meeting? Regroup and try again. Seek the advice or input from someone outside the situation or appeal to someone else in your district for help (the principal or special education supervisor, for example). When necessary, pursue legal remedies, such as mediation or Due Process.

Related Articles:

- [Advocating for Your Child](#)
- [What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?](#)
- [Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Basics](#)
- [Preschool Special Education Basics](#)
- [School-Age Special Education Basics](#)
- [All These Appointments! All This Paperwork! How to Stay Organized](#)

ALL THESE APPOINTMENTS! ALL THIS PAPERWORK! HOW TO STAY ORGANIZED

All these appointments!

All these people!

All this paperwork!

The world of Autism Spectrum Disorder is a whirlwind of new information, becoming involved with agencies and people that you never expected to need to know. So.....

How does one possibly keep track of it all, not lose paperwork, and stay organized?

This is quite the project, and, if you come up with a system, it is possible to stay “on top” of most of it. Though it takes work to stay organized, you will be much better off in the long run!

When coming up with your system, consider whether you are “high tech” or “low tech.” Think about what type of program is going to work best for you. Computer, or pen and paper based? Then:

- Get a calendar.

Choose one that will not get placed under a pile of recycled papers and accidentally get tossed! Maybe one to attach to the refrigerator? A large one to tack on the wall? Or small one to carry in your bag? Or maybe Gmail or Google calendar on your phone and computer? Don't forget to write in the appointment – who, where, and why!

- Organize the Paperwork!

It's important to keep the documents where you will find them. There are options. Maybe you'd like to keep your documents in an expansion file, a large binder, or perhaps a file cabinet? Or just maybe you will want to scan everything into your computer. The benefit of a computer is that you will have any and all documentation you will need. The bad news is that you will either have to take your computer with you to any and all appointments, or try to anticipate what you will need and print and bring that documentation with you.

For those who choose the paper system, it's fine to simply place the newest document in the front of the pile. But for those of you who want to take the step to “extreme” organizer, here's a possible plan for you:

Medical:

1. General Pediatrician
2. Developmental Pediatrician
3. Specialty care (Neurology, GI, Allergy, etc.)

Education:

1. Evaluations
2. IFSP/IEPs
3. Educator/therapists notes
4. Permissions and Procedural Safeguards

Behavior Health:

1. Evaluation and recommendations

2. Plan
3. Progress notes

Government forms (since benefits need to be renewed periodically, having documentation in one place will help you for the next round):

1. Supplemental Security application and determination letter (if you choose to appeal, keep all these documents together)
2. In PA: Application and determination letter for Medical Assistance, plus any invoices you submitted for reimbursement
3. In NJ: Application and determination letter for supports and services through the Division of Developmental Disabilities

Related Articles:

- [Using a Care Binder to Stay Organized](#)

HOW TO FIND GOOD QUALITY, SAFE CHILD CARE FOR CHILDREN ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM

What is child care?

Child care is the caring for and supervision of a child. Some families need regular child care to keep their children safe when the parents or other family members are not able to provide supervision for regular periods of time, for example, when they are at work or school. Families may also need intermittent child care for short periods of time while they go to a doctor or dentist appointment or when they plan a well-deserved afternoon or evening out.

How do I find good child care?

In finding a child care provider, a family raising a child on the autism spectrum may have concerns above and beyond those of families with typically developing children. Because of behaviors or other special needs a child on the autism spectrum may have, parents may have some of the following concerns:

- Will the care providers know how to appropriately care for my child?
- Will my child be included in activities, or left on his or her own (which he or

she may prefer)?

- Will my child have a meltdown and will someone get hurt?
- Will the care providers be kind, even if my child is more difficult to care for?

Word of mouth is one of the best ways to find good child care, particularly when the person making the recommendation knows your child well or understands the challenges of caring for a child on the autism spectrum. A few good resources for finding child care are:

- *Parent Support Groups* – If you belong to a good parent support group (one that meets in person or on-line, if it has local members), the members may already be your “go to people.” They are the members of your community who have faced every hurdle and jumped through every hoop before you. So rather than break new ground, it is best to ask for their wisdom and advice.
- *Teachers, counselors, special needs coordinators, therapists, etc.* – These are your next line of defense. They may know of other families in similar situations that have figured this out and may be able to put you in contact with those who have achieved success. (Or they may be interested in providing intermittent child care themselves.)
- *Places of worship* in your neighborhood – The church, synagogue, mosque, or temple that you belong to may house a daycare, nursery school, and/or after school program. This personal connection often feels better for families, and the familiar environment feels better for children on the autism spectrum.
- *Community Centers* – Places like YMCAs and neighborhood community centers sometimes have child care that can be accessed for short periods of time, or for teacher in-service days and some school holidays. They may also have regular daycare and after school programs.
- *Local colleges and universities* – Students from schools of nursing, education, special education, speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, psychology, or social work may be interested in part-time work. They may have more experience and/or training working with children with special needs than the average student. Additionally, students often have irregular schedules and may be available during the day. To get in contact with local college students, go to the school’s

website and call the number for the particular department. Some colleges may also have an on-line job posting service.

- *CCIS - Child Care Information Services* - Pennsylvania CCIS provides a service to members of the community to locate appropriate child care resources in their community.
- *Girls Scout troops and local libraries* - These organizations often sponsor “babysitting” courses which may contain lessons about handling emergencies. They may maintain a list of those who attended the class for you to call.
- *Care.com®* - This is a national website that has a search engine for finding local child care providers. Note that there is a subscriber fee to join and maintain membership in this organization, even before you know if they have staff available to interview.

How do I choose a child care provider for my child?

The following is a set of practical questions that may be useful for you to use when interviewing child care providers.

1. How much experience do they have caring for children? Do they have experience caring for children with special needs?
2. Can they change a diaper?
3. Can they prepare a meal?
4. Are they comfortable getting the child ready for bed?
5. Have they taken any first aid, safety, or babysitting classes?
6. What do they like best about babysitting? What do they like least?
7. What would they do in an emergency?
8. How would they spend their time with your child? Any activities planned?
9. How much do they charge?
10. Do they have references?
11. Do they have state child abuse clearances?

Consider completing the [care binder](#) found on this website and have this information available for your child care providers. A care binder is a tool for families who have children with special health care needs to help keep health records and important safety information organized.

Related Articles:

- [Afterschool Care](#)
- [Why Your Family Needs Respite](#)

Recommended Link:

- [CAR Resource Directory \(search in the Recreation and Respite section\)](#)

Additional Resources:

- [Child care and Children with Special Needs](#)
 - [Child Care Information Services of Philadelphia](#)
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PREPARING YOUR CHILD FOR A BLOOD DRAW

If your child on the autism spectrum needs to have a blood draw due to an upcoming medical procedure or for testing, both you and your child may be anxious about it. In preparing for the blood draw procedure, consider whether your child will respond best if he or she knows what will happen, or if your child will do better without expecting the needle prick. The information below may help ease the concerns of both you and your child.

Before the Blood Draw:

- If your child likes to know what will happen, talk about what to expect, use pictures, and practice. If it is better for your child not to know, just work on the next step (relaxation practice), and don't talk about a blood draw.
- Help your child practice relaxing and being calm long before the blood draw. Use visual cues (like pictures or hand signals) to start the techniques. Reward your child for practicing! Examples of relaxation techniques are:
 - Deep breathing (pinwheels and bubbles are great helps)
 - Muscle tensing/relaxing
 - Visualization
 - Favorite toys/activities
 - Music and laughter

- Don't talk much about the pain or discomfort. Focus on what to do instead.
- Talk to the medical staff before you go.
 - Schedule the appointment at a good time of day for your child.
 - Ask to have someone there who has experience with special needs (such as ASD).
 - Ask that your child be taken straight back without waiting.
- Bring comfort items and communication tools with you. Bring things with you to use as rewards.

During the Blood Draw:

- Tell the medical staff how best to get your child to comply with what needs to be done.
- Stay calm yourself at all times, even if you are worried or angry.
- Begin to distract your child before the blood draw begins. Use the calming and relaxing techniques you practiced. Give your child items for distraction and comfort before the blood draw procedure begins.
- If your child asks, don't lie about the "sting" or "pinch," but don't focus on it.
- Use simple language to explain what is happening.
- Avoid long conversations about fears or worries, but tell your child that it is okay to feel that way.
- Refer to the medical staff as helpers.
- Set priorities with the medical staff for the most important things to get done during the visit. If less important things are not done, that's okay.
- Give your child choices along the way, like which chair, what color band aid, which treat to get afterwards, etc. This helps your child feel like he or she has some control.
- Tell your child he or she is doing a great job, and be specific about every little thing he or she does that is helpful (sitting in the chair, holding his or her arm out, holding still, looking at Mom, listening to the "helpers," etc.).

Tools to Help Prepare Your Child for a New Experience

Many of the tools that you may use to help your child in the community, for example visual schedules, Social Stories™, and "First/Then" boards, can be used to help your child at a blood draw.

- Your child may be very familiar with using a *visual schedule* at home or school. A visual schedule can also help with a blood draw. Visual schedules can be a checklist going down the page, a sequence of pictures going across the page, or a series of pictures in a binder. Call the facility which will be doing the blood draw to get specific information to include and/or ask if you can visit them ahead of time to take photos to include in your visual schedule.
 - Make a checklist or chart of what will happen, in order, using pictures or drawings.
 - Think of the steps to get the job done. For example: Driving to the hospital, riding in the elevator, checking in, getting weighed, sitting in the chair, holding my arm out, feeling a little pinch, Mom saying “Good Job,” the nurse putting on a Band-Aid™, getting a reward or treat, going home. Put a picture or drawing on the schedule for each step.
 - Be sure to put pictures of “wait,” “play,” “reward,” or “break,” as well as things that have to be done.
 - Mark each step or take it off the schedule when it is finished.
- *Social Stories*™ describe an event or situation with the intent of explaining the circumstances, perspectives, and expected behaviors that occur during the event or situation. They can be particularly helpful when preparing for an out of the ordinary situation, such as a blood draw. To be effective, the social story you create should be highly individualized and written in the first-person, from the point of view of your child. You can use pictures or drawings to help your child visualize the experience. Make sure to be specific about what will happen, what your child needs to do, and what will happen (rewards) when your child has done what is asked. (See the ideas under visual schedule, above.) Once created, the story can be read or viewed over and over again to make the process familiar to your child.
- A First/Then board visually reinforces for a child that if he or she does an unpreferred task, such as a blood draw, he or she will get a reward. Use pictures and simple words to help your child understand that “First,” he or she needs to do this thing (give a little bit of blood), “Then,” he or she can have or do the thing he or she really wants. You can break the task down into small steps that each have a reward, such as “First: sit in the chair,” “Then: cookie/hug/iPad,” by changing the pictures on the board for each

step.

FIRST	THEN
(Put a picture or drawing of the thing that needs to be done here)	(Put a picture or drawing of an <i>immediate</i> reward your child can get or do when finished with the “First” task.)

Related Articles:

- [Clinical Genetics Evaluations](#)
- [Going to a Medical Appointment](#)

Additional Resources:

- [Blood Draw Tool Kit, from Autism Speaks®](#)

ACCOMMODATIONS AND SUPPORTS FOR SCHOOL-AGE STUDENTS ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM

Accommodations and supports are designed to minimize obstacles to learning or participating in the educational environment. The accommodations and supports your child receives will depend on your child’s needs and the goals set in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan. The list below contains some common ones used with students on the autism spectrum. Many of the supports listed are visual. Often children on the autism spectrum are visual learners, meaning they process information better when it is shown to them. Visual supports can also help children on the spectrum express themselves better.

Make sure to include specifics in your child’s IEP about when and how all accommodations and supports are to be used. And make sure you learn how to use strategies that are used at school at home. Many of the tools used at school will also be helpful at home when used in a consistent manner.

Social Stories™: Social Stories™ describe an event or situation with the intent of explaining the circumstances, perspectives, and expected behaviors that occur during the event or situation. To be effective, Social Stories™ should be highly individualized. Frequently, they may include pictures or photos of the individuals involved. They can be particularly helpful when preparing for an out of the ordinary situation, such as school picture day or a fire alarm, or when preparing for a new or difficult activity, for example, going to a restaurant, on a field trip, to a party, or to the dentist. Once created, a Social Story™ should be read to the individual many times until the expectations conveyed in the story are well understood. Social Stories™ can be created on an iPad® or other electronic device, which may make them more accessible and/or desirable for some students.

Picture Schedules: One of the common features of many individuals on the autism spectrum is the need for routine and structure. Picture schedules provide a visual representation of what is going to happen during the day or within a certain part of the day (for example, the details of a certain activity). They are helpful in reducing worry over “what comes next” and in helping smooth transitions. To be most effective, teachers and caregivers should check off or otherwise indicate when an activity has been completed (or have the child do it)

Choice Boards: Choice boards display a limited number of options for activities. Sometimes individuals on the autism spectrum have difficulty figuring out what to do next. A choice board can help simplify the decision making process and promote independence.

Visual Communication Systems: Every individual on the autism spectrum has difficulty with communication, whether or not they are able to speak. A visual communication system uses picture symbols in place of words and can be useful to some degree with all children, regardless of verbal language ability. Two common visual communication systems are the Picture Exchange Communication System™ (PECS) and sign language.

Behavior Charts/Reward Systems: Behavior charts and reward systems are a good way to positively reinforce desired behaviors. They target only a few behaviors to influence at a time and then keep track of how many times the behavior is achieved by using tokens, stickers, smiley faces, or another visual reminder of accomplishment. When a certain number of tokens are earned, they can be turned in for a larger incentive. Incentives and goals should be constantly monitored to

make sure they remain appropriate and encouraging.

Computer Use: Handwriting can be difficult for many children on the autism spectrum. If your child can type faster than he or she can write, it may be a good idea to have your child use a computer to take notes and to complete written assignments. Additionally, computers can be good for organizing materials. Rather than have a folder with handouts, handouts can be emailed to your child or downloaded from a central site, and your child can store them on a computer. A teacher or parent may need to assist the child in coming up with a good organization system for the computer.

Extra Time: Students on the autism spectrum may need longer to accomplish certain tasks than their typically developing peers need. For example, extra time may be provided to take tests or quizzes, to turn in homework and/or projects, or even to get to and from class. Some students on the autism spectrum are dismissed from each class a few minutes early so they can navigate the hallways when they are not so congested. The benefits of early dismissal need to be weighed against the loss of time in the classroom – particularly if the teacher tends to make or explain assignments at the end of class. If it is determined that extra time between classes is needed, an accommodation can be made for how the student is assigned homework (for example, by receiving a sheet that explains the assignment in detail and providing some other time in the day for the student to ask for clarification).

Organizational Support: Students on the spectrum can confront a number of organizational challenges at school. These can relate to losing or forgetting things (such as losing homework or papers, forgetting to turn things in, not knowing what homework is assigned, coming to class without needed books or supplies, and forgetting permission slips, lunch money, or gym clothes). Organizational challenges may also relate to organization of thought (as required in writing a paper or figuring out order of operations in a math problem). Checklists, folder systems, color-coded class materials, daily binder checks, assignment notebooks, visual prompts, electronic reminders, and graphic organizers can be used to help, if the student is taught how to use them. Don't try too many new systems at once, however, as this can be overwhelming. Give time for a new system to be learned and become routine before evaluating its effectiveness and trying a new strategy.

Help with Class Notes: If your student has a hard time listening and taking notes at

the same time, there may be alternatives to classic note taking. Some students are permitted to tape record class, use another student's notes, or use the teacher's outline for the class.

Homework Modifications: Some students on the autism spectrum have a reduced homework load or don't have any homework at all. Others receive more time to do long term-projects, or have projects assigned in smaller chunks. Some students benefit from seeing a sample project or paper so they can visualize what is expected.

Preferential Seating: Students on the spectrum may be easily distracted in the classroom. Many students benefit from being seated close to where the teacher usually speaks. Others may need to be separated from noisier students or from windows, air vents, or other classroom distractions.

Timers: Depending on the child, timers can be a good way to remind a child it is time to end one activity and begin another. Finding a timer that provides a warning before time expires is ideal. Otherwise, the timer may be anxiety provoking and more of a problem than a benefit.

Communication Book: Children make the most progress when there is good communication between home and school. One way to ensure this is to set up a regular method of corresponding. Communication books are notebooks that travel back and forth from home and school and include short notes by the teacher and parents. Sometimes they include checklists or rating scales to let parents know how the child is doing in school with respect to particular areas being monitored. Teachers can let parents know about the child's day and provide ways to reinforce learning at home. There should be a place for parents to write about difficulties they are having at home or comment on new strategies or therapies that are working. Everyone is busy, so don't expect pages of detailed information. The purpose of the communication book is not to provide daily progress on IEP goals. It is to promote an open dialogue between parents and educators.

Fidgets: A fidget is an item that your child can hold that may help with attention, calming, and focus - or, depending on the fidget and the child, it can be a distraction. Examples include a stress ball, string, or a small car with wheels to turn. Fidgets should be saved for situations in which attention is important and should be taken away after the situation ends. Otherwise, they may become

common place and lose their desired effect. Also, it is important to constantly reevaluate the need for and effectiveness of fidgets, and to have more than one option at the ready should a beneficial fidget lose its usefulness.

Frequent Breaks: Some students on the autism spectrum are not capable of staying engaged in activities as long as their peers. These children may benefit from breaks outside of the energy of the classroom. Sometimes having a quiet place to go is enough to prepare the student to reengage in the classroom environment. For others, it is the movement - the walk to another part of the school - that is beneficial.

Many of the accommodations listed above are referred to as “Assistive Technology.” Assistive Technology is any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether modified or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities. Assistive Technology can be low-tech, including laminated picture schedules, or high-tech, such as the use of an iPad® to create Social Stories™ or otherwise help a child transition between activities.

Related Articles:

- [IEP Basics for Families of School-Age Students](#)
- [504 Basics](#)
- [Supports for Students with ASD on Field Trips](#)
- [Picture Exchange Communication System](#)
- [American Sign Language](#)
- [Behavior Intervention Plan](#)
- [Classroom Assessments/Curriculum-Based Assessments](#)
- [Executive Functioning Difficulties](#)

Additional Resources:

- [Visual Supports and Autism Spectrum Disorder](#)
- [Online Accommodations Bibliography](#)
- [Assistive Technology for Children with Autism](#)
- [Assistive Technology in the IEP](#)
- [Assessment and Accommodations](#)
- [Supports, Modifications, and Accommodations for Students](#)

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