

# Snowflakes Study Guide



## What is autism?

Autism Spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication, and behavioral challenges. There is often nothing about how people with ASD look that sets them apart from other people, but people with ASD may communicate, interact, behave, and learn in ways that are different from most other people. The learning, thinking, and problem-solving abilities of people with ASD can range from gifted to severely challenged. Some people with ASD need a lot of help in their daily lives; others need less.

Autism affects the way a person's brain and body work, and someone with the disorder might have trouble speaking, make strange sounds or not talk at all. About 25 percent of people diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder are considered nonverbal, but they can sometimes communicate by writing, sign language or picture cards. Persons on the spectrum may flap their hands, spin in circles, do or say the same things repetitively, or sit quietly and avoid looking at others.

**But none of that dampens the fact that they're intelligent, capable, passionate, honest people. People who, in many cases, deeply value friendship.**

## How can I be a good friend to someone with autism?

**When you become a friend to a person with autism, you both learn a lot from each other. Here are some ideas that can help you be a better friend to a kid with autism:**

- **Accept** your friend's differences.
- **Know** that some kids with autism are really smart, just in a different way.
- **Protect** your friend from things that bother him or her.
- **Talk** in small sentences with simple words and use simple gestures like pointing.
- **Use** pictures or write down what you want to say to help your friend understand.
- **Join** your friend in activities that interest him or her.
- **Be patient** – understand that your friend doesn't mean to bother you or others.
- **Wait** – give him or her extra time to answer your question or complete an activity.
- **Invite** your friend to play with you and to join you in group activities. Teach your friend how to play by showing them what they can do in an activity or game.
- **Sit near** your friend whenever you can, and help him or her do things if they want you to.
- **Never** be afraid to ask your teacher questions about your classmates with autism.
- **Help** other kids learn about autism.
- **Stand up** for your friend with ASD.



## Snowflakes Study Guide *continued...*

### What are the symptoms of autism?

People with ASD often have problems with social, emotional, and communication skills. They might repeat certain behaviors and might not want change in their daily activities. Many people with ASD also have different ways of learning, paying attention, or reacting to things. Signs of ASD begin during early childhood and typically last throughout a person's life.

### How is autism treated?

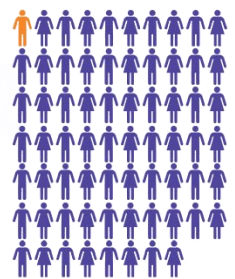
Each child or adult with autism is unique and, so, each autism intervention plan should be tailored to address specific needs. Intervention can involve behavioral treatments, medicines or both. Addressing these conditions can improve attention, learning and related behaviors.

Early intensive behavioral intervention involves a child's entire family, working closely with a team of professionals. In some early intervention programs, therapists come into the home to deliver services. Other programs deliver therapy in a specialized center, classroom or preschool. Typically, different interventions and supports become appropriate as a child develops and acquires social and learning skills. As children with autism enter school, for example, they may benefit from targeted social skills training and specialized approaches to teaching.

### How many people are affected by autism?

- About 1 in 68 children has been identified with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) according to estimates from CDC's Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network.
- ASD is reported to occur in all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups.
- ASD is almost 5 times more common among boys (1 in 42) than among girls (1 in 189).

#### NUMBER OF CHILDREN IDENTIFIED WITH ASD



**1 in 68**



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

### Why do people say “person on the spectrum” or “person with autism” instead of autistic?

It's more acceptable to refer to children on the spectrum as “children with autism” rather than “autistic children.” When a child has leukemia, we say the child has cancer, not that the child is cancerous. To some families, saying a child is autistic defines them only by their autism.

### Where can I learn more?

For more information, contact one of these organizations:

**Autism Society**—<http://www.autism-society.org/online-courses-and-tutorials/>

**Thompson Center**—<http://thompsoncenter.missouri.edu/>

**The Autism Program**—<http://theautismprogram.org/>

**Autism Speaks**—[https://www.autismspeaks.org/?gclid=CJSy2uvcm8QCFQmpaQodApoA\\_g](https://www.autismspeaks.org/?gclid=CJSy2uvcm8QCFQmpaQodApoA_g)