

## Autism Awareness & Acceptance facts

Pick and choose from these facts that we have categorized by the age of the audience. Use them in lessons, or consider a “fact of the day” for your morning announcements.

### Elementary

#### Awareness:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder is a developmental disability. This means the brains of kids with autism grow differently from most kids’ brains.
- Autism is not a disease, and it is not contagious. You cannot “catch” autism.
- Kids with autism have trouble making sense of things they see, smell, hear, taste, touch, and experience. That can make it hard for them to talk, listen, understand, play, and learn.
- Kids are affected by autism in different ways. They might seem only a little different from you, or they might seem very different. For example, some of them cannot speak at all.
- In North Carolina, as many as 1 in 44 children have Autism Spectrum Disorder. Probably, some of the children in your school have autism.
- Kids with autism often have trouble understanding others’ faces. They might not be able to tell when you are happy or mad. This can make it hard for them to know how to talk to you or play with you, but it doesn’t mean they don’t want to be friends.

#### Acceptance:

- You can be a friend to someone with autism. They might be different from you in some ways, but they also are like you in a lot of ways.
- Next time you are playing in a group, ask the kids who seem to play by themselves a lot to play with you. Maybe they want to but don’t know how to start.
- Be understanding when kids act in a way that is different, as long as they are not hurting anyone. They might not know why their behavior is not OK. Or maybe what they are doing is unusual, but not such a big deal when you really think about it.
- Take some time to get to know them. They probably know a lot about their favorite things, like trains or video games, and they’ll be happy to tell you all about it. You could learn a lot!
- If you want to help more, ask your teachers whether anyone needs a buddy for lunch or recess. Just by sitting and talking with them, you can be a friend.
- Take a stand if you see someone teasing or bullying someone with autism. Tell them that’s not cool!

## Middle School

### Awareness:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder is a lifelong developmental disability that typically appears by the time a child is three years old.
- Autism is not a disease, and it is not contagious. You cannot “catch” autism.
- In North Carolina, the CDC estimates that as many as 1 in 44 children may be diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Probably, some of the children in your school have autism.
- Kids with autism have trouble making sense of things they see, smell, hear, taste, touch, and experience. That can make it hard for them to talk, listen, understand, play, and learn.
- Kids are affected by autism in different ways. They might seem only a little different from you, or they might seem very different. For example, some of them cannot speak at all.
- A person with ASD might:
  - talk about or show interest in a restricted range of topics
  - have trouble relating to others or not have an interest in other people
  - have trouble understanding other people’s feelings or talking about their own feelings
  - repeat actions over and over again
  - have trouble adapting when a routine changes
  - have unusual reactions to the way things smell, taste, look, feel, or sound
- The Autism Society of North Carolina works to improve the lives of individuals affected by autism by providing one-on-one services, family support, education, and advocacy. To get help or learn how to support our efforts, visit [www.autismsociety-nc.org](http://www.autismsociety-nc.org).

### Acceptance:

- Kids with autism often have trouble understanding others’ facial expressions. This can make it hard for them to know how to react to others, but it doesn’t mean they don’t want to interact.
- You can be a friend to someone with autism. They might be different from you in some ways, but they also have a lot of ways they are just like you.
- Next time you are hanging out in a group, ask the kids who seem to be alone a lot to join you. Maybe they want to but don’t know where to start.
- Be understanding when kids act in a way that is different, as long as they are not hurting anyone. They might not know why their behavior is not OK. Or maybe what they are doing is unusual, but not such a big deal when you really think about it.
- Take some time to get to know them. They probably know a lot about their favorite things, like trains or video games, and they’ll be happy to tell you all about it. You could learn a lot!
- Look beyond your peers’ disability to their abilities!
- Take a stand if you see someone teasing or bullying someone with autism. Tell them that’s not cool!
- If you want to help more, ask your teachers about starting a peer tutoring program or buddy program.

## High School

### Awareness:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder is a lifelong developmental disability that typically appears by the time a child is three years old.
- In North Carolina, the CDC estimates that as many as 1 in 44 children may be diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Autism is five times more prevalent in boys than in girls.
- Autism Spectrum Disorder affects a person's ability to understand what they see, hear, and otherwise sense. It is a brain disorder that affects communication, social interaction, and behavior.
- Individuals with autism typically have difficulty understanding verbal and nonverbal communication and learning appropriate ways of relating to other people, objects, and events.
- No two people with ASD are the same. As its name implies, ASD is a spectrum disorder that affects individuals differently and with varying degrees of severity.
- 1 in 3 young adults with autism has no paid job experience, college education, or technical schooling nearly seven years after high school graduation.
- A person with ASD might:
  - talk about or show interest in a restricted range of topics
  - have trouble relating to others or not have an interest in other people
  - have trouble understanding other people's feelings or talking about their own feelings
  - repeat actions over and over again
  - have trouble adapting when a routine changes
  - have unusual reactions to the way things smell, taste, look, feel, or sound

### Acceptance:

- The Autism Society of North Carolina's awareness campaign this April focuses on moving beyond awareness to acceptance. "Awareness is the first step. Acceptance is the goal."
- Individuals with autism possess unique skills and can contribute to their communities when they receive the right support.
- Here are some ways you can help your peers with autism or other developmental disabilities:
  - Start or join a peer tutoring program. Often, students with autism have a special interest that they know all about. Put them in charge of those, and help them in other areas.
  - Start or join a buddy program at your school. You can learn from each other while you are having fun.
  - Include them in your social circles. Take the initiative to invite them; they might not know how to approach others.
  - Stand up against bullying. Don't let others tease or bully kids who are different.
- The Autism Society of North Carolina works to improve the lives of individuals affected by autism by providing one-on-one services, family support, education, and advocacy. To get help or learn how to support our efforts, visit [www.autismsociety-nc.org](http://www.autismsociety-nc.org).