



Parent Notes

# Module 5

**Autism: Developing skills in your child**

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## In brief

This module helps you build on the skills that you have been teaching your child during the earlier modules. Learning further or new skills helps replace difficult behaviours and prevent the development of new difficult behaviours.

# Overview



**See Module 5 Page 1**

Children with autism have a different learning style to typically developing children and children with an intellectual disability. Generally they do not learn by observation and they learn in chunks. For example, children with autism often learn language in chunks. That is, they repeat a whole phrase or sentence they have heard (echolalia) and may then use it to try and communicate without understanding the individual words.

# Teaching your child new skills



See Module 5 Page 3

## Selecting the skills to teach

Build on your child's existing skills. Here are some of the learning strengths of children with autism.

- Tend to learn information in chunks.
- May be able to remember information for a long time.
- Are visual learners.
- Generally able to learn and repeat long routines.
- Can understand and use concrete information and rules (e.g. you do not touch the person in front of you when standing in a queue).
- Are able to focus on small details.

## Choose skills your child wants to learn



See Module 5 Page 4

The difficulty here will be motivating your child to learn something different. Learning involves change which is often difficult for a child with autism. Furthermore people with autism have difficulty switching on their attention. This is more obvious when they are required to attend to things other than their natural interests. They may require more time to focus their attention.

Your child may feel anxious and highly stressed when learning a new skill and demonstrate challenging behaviour to communicate that the task is too difficult.

## Ways of teaching skills to your child



**See Module 5 Page 9**

The use of a schedule will be helpful to support your child's learning when introducing a new skill.

# Your child at school

## Selecting a school for your child



See Module 5 Page 13

You may find it useful to consider the following needs of your child.

### Environmental

- Security considerations
- Playground structure/size
- Classroom size/layout/structure
- Size of the school
- Toileting facilities

### Educational

- How is the learning environment structured?
- Is the program flexible to cater for individual needs? How? (For example, use of visual schedules, structures in place to reduce stress levels, lunchtime activities.)
- What additional support is available and how frequently? (For example, teacher's aide, speech therapy and reading recovery.)
- What input can you have as a parent?

### The process

- What is the school's process for program support group meetings?
- What is the school's format for individual educational plans?
- What is the school's policy on integration?
- What is the school's process for integration?
- How is funding allocated?

### More questions to ask

- What experience has the school had with students with autism spectrum disorder?
- What are the classroom structures like throughout the school?
- Does the school have any existing contacts with outside support agencies?
- What additional programs are available? (Such as before-school and after-school care.)