

The following describes the symptoms a child must demonstrate to be diagnosed with ASD:

1 Difficulties with social interaction and communication (across settings):

- Social-emotional reciprocity (sharing interests or emotions, pointing out objects, initiating social situations, back and forth conversation)
 - Using and understanding nonverbal communication (eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, body-language, combining verbal and nonverbal efforts)
 - Making and keeping age-typical social relationships (showing interest in others, sharing imaginative play, adjusting behavior to match situations)
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2 Restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities (two or more of these):

- Repetitive speech, motor movements, or use of objects (hand flapping, echolalia, non-functional use of objects)
 - Inflexibility about routines, repetitive patterns of behavior, or strong resistance to change (insistence on same driving route, repetitive questioning or extreme distress at small changes)
 - Restricted, fixated interests that are abnormally intense or focused (attachment to objects, excessively narrow or preoccupying interests)
 - Over- or under-reactivity to sensory input or unusual interest in sensory aspects of the environment (pain/heat/cold, specific sounds or textures, smelling or touching of objects, fascination with lights or spinning objects)
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3 These difficulties must be present in early childhood (but may not be fully observed until social demands exceed a person's abilities).

4 These difficulties limit and impair everyday functioning.

Other Characteristics of ASD

Advanced thinking

Individuals with an ASD can be very bright and highly motivated by their own internal desire to master a subject. They sometimes have intense interests and can become experts in those areas. Even those who are very strong on cognitive testing may still have a hard time in many areas such as:

- Abstract thinking
- Seeing the whole picture
- Filtering out what is not important
- Organization
- Planning
- Problem solving
- Taking something they have learned and applying it to a different setting.

Global Developmental Delay (GDD)

This diagnosis is provided when young children are delayed across different areas of their lives (such as communication, fine motor skills, or age-typical independence skills). Global simply means that the delay can be seen across most areas of the child's abilities. This diagnosis is for children six years old and under.

Intellectual Disability (ID)

If a person has low IQ (a measure of mental ability) and their "life skills" are significantly delayed after age six, it is called Intellectual Disability. ID must be diagnosed before age 18, and includes people with significant limitations in their ability to carry on everyday life activities (such as self-care and communicating), as well as in their general mental abilities to reason, plan, and solve problems.

