

The Golf Foundation's Guide to Coaching Children with Autism.

What is Autism?

Autism is a developmental disability that affects how a person communicates and relates to other people for their lifetime.

Autism is a spectrum condition meaning all people with autism share certain differences and the condition they have will affect them in different ways. They all see and make sense of the world in different ways.

Young people with autism share differences in the following areas:

- **Social communication and social interaction**
- **Restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviours, activities or interests**
- **Sensory processing**

Young People with Autism Strength's

- **Attention to detail**
- **Problem solving skills**
- **High level of concentration**
- **Reliability and loyalty**
- **Technical ability and specialism**

Sensory Sensitivities

Young People on the autistic spectrum can experience sensory sensitivities in the following 7 areas:

- 1 Tactile**
- 2 Visual**
- 3 Auditory**
- 4 Gustatory**
- 5 Olfactory**
- 6 Proprioceptive**
- 7 Vestibular**

These sensors can be either intensified or under-sensitive which can impact a young person's actions and capability to concentrate. Check out some information why young people with Autism may be less likely to exercise.





Literal interpretation of language

Golf Example: You may be working on a downhill chip and you tell the young person to hit the chip soft, they will take this literally and hit it as soft as they can with the ball often only travelling a few inches. Instead for this scenario use landing spots and ask the young person to get the ball to land in a specific spot. This landing spot may be identified by using visual cues on the floor considering the downhill slope.

Difficulty identifying non-verbal cues

Golf Example: Young autistic people have difficulty identifying non-verbal communication such as eye contact, tone of voice, body language and facial expressions. This may mean during a golf lesson you need to provide short clear verbal instruction with visual aids (please see our cue cards on our website which are free to download to help you with this). Try to avoid sarcasm and relying on your tone of voice or body language. For example, when explaining 'Around the bend' putting game you would say, 'Start from (coloured cone) and work round clockwise hitting one putt from each cone'

High level of stress and anxiety when experiencing environmental changes (changes to coach, activity space and new participants)

Golf Example: When experiencing environmental changes you may need to take some extra time in the preparation that introduces the young person to the changes that will take place. For example, if the session is going to be at the range and it is their first time, offer them and their parents the opportunity to come to the range a few days before to take a look round and experience the real thing.

Single Focus (struggle to focus on more than one thing at once)

Golf Example: When showing activities or games that might be taking place during a 1 hour session you will need to show the young person one game only and they start on this activity/game. They will then need to be shown the other games/activities as they come to them.



Click here for links to other useful websites for more information:

- [Check Out Here other top tips for professionals coaching people with Autism](#)
- [Check Out Here other top tips for engaging people with Autism into sport and team games](#)
- [Check Out Here some information why young people with Autism may be less likely to exercise](#)