

Dear Professor: Here are two lists to help acclimate you to students on the spectrum. This material comes from Stairway to STEM, where there are more resources for instructors, students, and parents.

15 Common Spectrum Behaviors

SOCIAL

- ❖ Difficulty reading body language
- ❖ Difficulty grasping others' standpoints
- ❖ Difficulty identifying and understanding moments of humor
- ❖ May have anxiety over group work

COMMUNICATIVE

- ❖ Difficulty waiting to take turns in conversation or to ask questions
- ❖ Difficulty with verbal and written expression
- ❖ May have poor handwriting
- ❖ May not be willing to verbally respond
- ❖ May not inflect voice

ABSTRACTION/GENERALIZATION

- ❖ Difficulty making inferences
- ❖ Difficulty cross-applying rules or techniques between activities or classes

CHANGE/ADVERSITY

- ❖ Difficulty adapting to change, especially if rapid
- ❖ May be oversensitive to disruptions
- ❖ May have anxiety over small details
- ❖ May shut down or not complete activities due to confusion

20 Ways an Instructor Can Help

Generally, professors can strive to be predictable in their instruction, set classroom rules and routines, be clear and specific, reiterate main points, and be patient!

SOCIAL/COMMUNICATIVE

- ❖ Request that students approach you to discuss their accommodations
- ❖ Invite questions and participation explicitly (if reticent)
- ❖ Mediate over-participation by establishing a rule or expectation
- ❖ Specify when it is appropriate for an excited student to share about specialized interests
- ❖ Encourage the student in his/her/their interests by allowing these to form part of an assignment somehow
- ❖ Offer a compliment when a student participates successfully/in turn
- ❖ Allow typing as an alternative to handwriting
- ❖ Protect students from teasing by other students

REPEATING/CLARIFYING

- ❖ Offer a written, accessible schedule for the semester
- ❖ Provide instructions more than once and in differing formats
- ❖ Be very detailed about grading criteria, etc.
- ❖ Provide progress reports
- ❖ Provide samples/examples
- ❖ Ask to make sure you've been clear
- ❖ Avoid ambiguous language

ABSTRACTION/GENERALIZATION

- ❖ Extract important points for students (from syllabus, assignments, and lectures)
- ❖ Demonstrate how course elements work together to serve larger, course/major/career purposes

CHANGE/ADVERSITY

- ❖ Break large tasks into manageable, consumable parts
- ❖ Provide early, multiple warnings of change
- ❖ Present a new activity promptly to avoid fear of the unknown