



Autism-friendly reporting

Media professionals play a vital role in shaping and reinforcing community attitudes and understanding of autism, and challenging myths and misrepresentations of autism and Autistic people.

The media provides a platform for Autistic people to share their life experiences, and generate widespread and greater understanding and acceptance of autism and Autistic people.

**Our purpose
a different brilliant®**

Understanding, engaging
and celebrating the strengths,
interests and aspirations of people
on the autism spectrum.

Aspect encourages autism-friendly interviewing whereby media learn about autism, listen to Autistic people's experiences, and show support through your reporting.

If you would like to learn more about autism or speak with an expert and Autistic spokesperson, please contact:
comms@aspect.org.au

Top ways to ensure autism-friendly reporting

Use appropriate language

When reporting on autism or Autistic people, or talking to Autistic people, the language used must be respectful, appropriate and accurate. Identity-first language should be prioritised, i.e. 'Autistic person' instead of 'person with autism' with individual preferences honoured. Outdated language including 'Autism Spectrum Disorder' 'living with autism;' or 'high or low functioning' should not be used as this can cause offence or reinforce negative and false stereotypes about autism and Autistic people. Language is powerful, it can change attitudes.



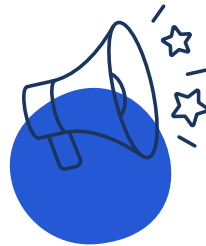
Use contemporary thinking

Thinking about autism has evolved over the years. We have moved away from deficit, medical or pity/inspiration thinking to theories that respect neurodiversity, focus on strengths and interests, and understand challenges as shared between Autistic and non-Autistic people. Whilst Autistic people do face daily barriers; it is not necessarily an exhaustive struggle for an Autistic person to get out of bed each day. Avoid language similar to 'you are so brave for living with autism'.



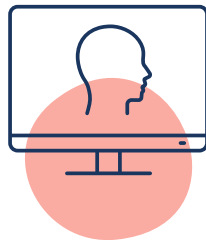
Respectful interview conduct

There are considerations to be taken before, during, and after the interview which should be followed where possible at all times. Be respectful, patient and empathetic during the interview and ensure you provide any sensory aids or accommodations as needed. An interview confirmation email with advanced scheduling notice and likely questions in advance can be a great aid to the Autistic individual being interviewed as it provides specific and structured information to follow. Ask the interviewee their preferred language and pronouns prior to starting the interview and above all, be patient, and allow extra time between questions. The more control you can give a person over the final product, including preferred photos, the better the end result.



Feature Autistic voices

When reporting on autism or Autistic people, it is vital to give Autistic people their fair voice. All work should be done in collaboration with an Autistic voice, if possible. A guiding principle in the disability community is 'nothing about us, without us'. When reporting on autism, give Autistic people the opportunity to share their experiences first-hand and respect both lived experience and the professional expertise of many Autistic people.



Use respectful photos and images

Any photos or images used should show the subject as part of the community, highlighting their strengths just as any other person. Avoid using images that depict the subject hidden in the shadows, trapped behind glass or any that would reinforce negative stereotypes. The puzzle piece symbol should be avoided; autism is not a puzzle to be solved, instead use the rainbow infinity symbol.

Aspect offers a comprehensive approach, based on the idea of a **different brilliant®**, that:

- Respects difference and diversity
- Builds a person's skills based on their strengths, interests, aspirations and support needs
- Develops autism-friendly environments
- Supports others to understand and embrace autism and to develop respectful supportive interactions.