



Autism- friendly reporting

**Our purpose
a different brilliant®**

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

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.

This information sheet provides tips for respectfully reporting about autism and Autistic people.

Top ways to ensure autism-friendly reporting

Use appropriate language

Autistic people use a variety of different terms to describe themselves (i.e. pronouns and Autistic identity) or autism. The language used by the media should always respect the Autistic interviewee's preferences. However, research tells us there are language preferences shared by most of the Autistic community and it is recommended that the media takes note of these preferences.

| Potentially offensive | Autistic preferred |
|---|---|
| Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) | Autism, Autistic |
| Person-first language (person with autism) | Identity-first language (Autistic person) |
| Autism symptoms and impairments | Specific Autistic experiences and characteristics |
| At risk of autism | May be Autistic, increased likelihood of being Autistic |
| Co-morbidity | Co-occurring |
| Functioning (high/low functioning) and severity (mild/moderate/severe) labels | Specific support needs |
| Cure, treatment or intervention | Specific support or service |
| Restricted interests and obsessions | Specialised, focused or intense interests |
| Normal person | Allistic or non-Autistic |



Autism-friendly reporting

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'.

Feature Autistic voices

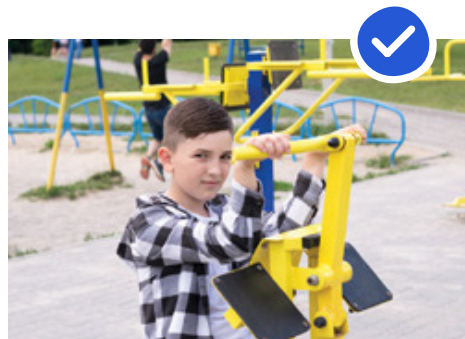
When reporting on autism or Autistic people, it is vital to give Autistic people their fair voice. All work should be done in collaboration with an Autistic voice, if possible. A guiding

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.

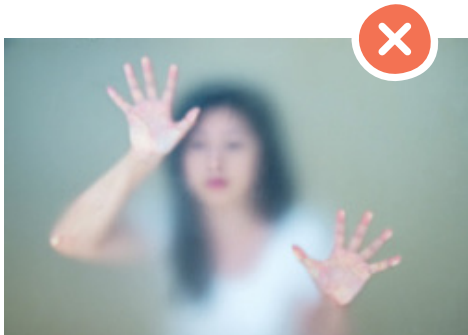
Use respectful photos and images

The way Autistic people are visually represented in film and photos is just as important as the language used to describe them.

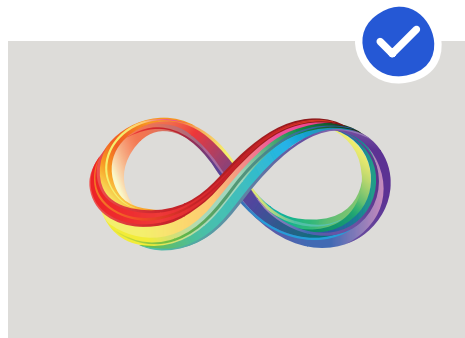
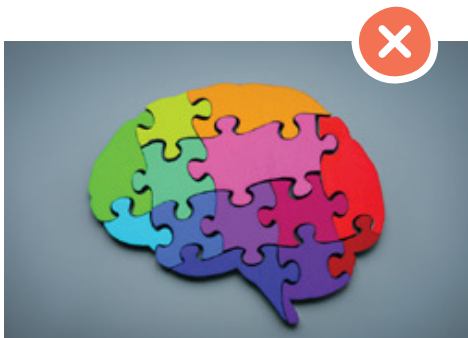
The images on this page outline some of the principles of respectful visual representation of Autistic people.



- Use images that portray the Autistic person in a positive and respectful light.
- Show the Autistic person as part of the community.



- Avoid images that reinforce negative stereotypes of autism, e.g. hidden, blurred or in the dark.
- Photograph Autistic people in a way that highlights their unique character, personality or interests.



- Use autism-positive symbols such as the neurodiversity rainbow infinity symbol.
- Many Autistic people find the puzzle piece imagery offensive, autism is not a puzzle that needs to be solved.

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