

This is an environmental assessment



and it will tell you how "autism/sensory impairment friendly" your room is. Many young people with autism experience sensory sensitivity, processing and perceptual differences. The assessment will also help other learners who don't have autism, but have multi sensory impairments, and share some of those sensory difficulties.

When we say 'room' this could be your classroom, your workspace, your play space or home space - anywhere where you are working or playing with individuals with autism and/or additional needs/sensory impairments.

You may consider completing one of these environmental assessments for each of the above spaces, or you may wish to target one specific space initially.

To complete the assessment, you are asked to rate different aspects of the environment, giving each a score from 1 to 5, where 1 is the lowest rating and 5 is the highest. By ticking the relevant rating for each aspect you've assessed, this will create a 'simple to interpret' graph. The more 'autism/sensory impairment friendly' your space is, the higher up the graph your score line will be. Areas for improvement will be easy to identify, with a target to achieve - ie the statement for description 5 for that environmental aspect.

Remember, this environment assessment may produce different results for the same space at different times of the day or in different seasons.

Let's get started!

Your blank chart to complete is below. Simply tick/star the score (1 - 5) for each environmental aspect (A to T) according to which of the statements below is most applicable. Which statement sounds most like your space? Each statement is accompanied by an explanation of what you are looking for - and a brief rationale for why.

This might be an ideal opportunity to assess your space as a team, to consider how it really works on all levels for you, as well as your learners!

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
5																				
4																				
3																				
2																				
1																				



A. The glare from the windows.

5. Normal light evenly spread, with little glare
4. Some glare, but manageable in most parts of the room
3. Increased glare, unmanageable in most parts of the room
2. High glare on sunny days
1. High glare even on dull days

B How is your lighting? Older fluorescent lighting can become dull and have an increased rate of flicker, which has been linked to photic seizures & visual discomfort.

5. We have no fluorescent lighting and the light in the room is pleasant/zoned well for activities.
4. We have no fluorescent lighting and the light is tolerable and partially zoned for activities.
3. We have bright fluorescent lighting which doesn't flicker & other lighting sources are available for zoned activities.
2. We have fluorescent lighting with good light but with an increased rate of flickering and some other lighting sources available for zoned activities.
1. Our lighting is fluorescent which is dull with a high rate of flicker, with no other lighting sources available for zoned activities.

C Does the light coming into the room create any distracting patterns? These could be shadows/reflections which may be deflected into other parts of the room.

5. There are no distracting patterns or shadows
4. The room has 25% distracting patterns or shadows
3. The room has 50% distracting patterns or shadows
2. The room has 75% distracting patterns or shadows
1. Every surface has distracting patterns and shadows

D Do you have light reflecting on objects such as metal or shiny surfaces? (This can be especially distracting on work surfaces in classrooms and kitchens.)

5. There are no reflective surfaces
4. There are 10% reflective surfaces
3. There are 20% reflective surfaces
2. There are 30% reflective surfaces
1. There are 50% reflective surfaces

E Visual clutter on the walls can be very distracting. We need to have clear wall spaces where learners can escape the bombardment of visual clutter.

5. 20% or less of the walls have distracting pictures, charts or written materials
4. 40% or less of the walls have distracting pictures, charts or written materials
3. 60% or less of the walls have distracting pictures, charts or written materials
2. 80% or less of the walls have distracting pictures, charts or written materials
1. 100% of the walls have distracting pictures, charts or written materials

F Colour contrasting surfaces help learners develop spatial awareness. A dark floor and light walls gives the strongest colour contrast.

5. There is a strong colour contrast between the floor and the walls.
- 4.
3. There is a moderate contrast between the floor and the walls.
- 2.
1. There is no colour contrast between the floor and the walls.

G A cluttered floor space can be confusing for learners with autism or multi sensory impairments. With less clutter on the floor, mobility is easier and distraction is reduced.

5. Our floors are clear with little visual clutter.
4. Our floors have some visual clutter in designated areas, where it is kept to a minimum.
3. Our floors have some visual clutter not in designated areas, where it is kept to a minimum.
2. Our floors have visual clutter, which is disorganised and hard to make sense of.
1. Our floors have a high level of visual clutter, which causes navigational difficulties and distraction.

H It helps our learners to have clutter free space to work or play. Without this they can become overwhelmed by the environment and other people.

5. We have designated 'clutter free' work and play areas which are easily identified by our learners.
4. We have some designated 'clutter free' work and play areas which require greater identification.
3. We have designated work and play areas, which do have clutter.
2. We do not have designated work and play areas and all spaces have a moderate level of clutter.
1. All of our work and play space is cluttered.

I Learners with autism and/or a hearing loss can be distracted by external/extraneous sounds. Stop and listen to the sound in your room when it is quiet - listen for hums, buzzes and other distracting noises.

5. There is no distracting sound
4. There are a few sporadic distracting sounds
3. There are a few, more constant distracting sounds
2. There are moderate levels of distracting sounds
1. There are high levels of distracting sounds

J. Learners with autism and/or a hearing loss can be distracted by the noise of people. Stop and listen to the sound in your room which is generated by other people.

5. There is no distracting sound
4. There are a few sporadic distracting sounds
3. There are a few, more constant distracting sounds
2. There are moderate levels of distracting sounds
1. There are high levels of distracting sounds



K Having a full view of your room with vulnerable learners may be important. Some spaces do not allow a full view, how is yours?

5. The room setting allows a 100% view of all learners at all times
4. The room setting allows a 75% view of all learners at all times
3. The room setting allows a 50% view of all learners at all times
2. The room setting allows a 20% view of all learners at all times
1. The room setting allows a 10% or less view of all learners at all times

L Hypersensitivity to smell can be very distracting, or in extremes cases, cause nausea or irritation for some learners.

5. There are no detectable smells at any time of day
4. There are some detectable smells at certain times of the day e.g. lunchtime
3. There is a moderate level of detectable smell at certain times
2. The room has a moderate level of detectable smell most of the day
1. The room has smells which are strong and detectable all day

M Some learners need to move at certain times of the day as periods of inactivity may be difficult to sustain.

5. There is a space in the room, free from hazards, to allow a kinaesthetic learner to move
4. There is a space close by, free from hazards, to allow a kinaesthetic learner to move
3. There is a space in a nearby room to allow a kinaesthetic learner to move
2. There is a space in a nearby room some distance away to allow a kinaesthetic learner to move
1. There are no spaces available to allow a kinaesthetic learner to move

N Some learners need to escape from an over stimulating space. Many schools/centres have a small room away from the main classroom, where learners can desensitise.

5. We have a clutter free 'escape space' away from the teaching space where we can control the sensory stimulus to meet the needs of the learner
4. We have a clutter free 'escape space' away from the teaching space where we cannot control the sensory stimulus to meet the needs of the learner
3. We do not have a clutter free 'escape space' away from the teaching space. We have a designated 'desensitising space' marked by room dividers, where we can control the sensory stimulus to meet the needs of the learner
2. We do not have a clutter free 'escape space' away from the teaching space. We use tents and umbrellas to create a 'desensitising space' where we can control the sensory stimulus to meet the needs of the learner.
1. There are no 'escape spaces' nearby/within our main teaching room.



O. Tools, toys and other objects stored on open shelving/in view can be very distracting. A good storage system, where these things are out of sight, can be essential.

5. We have great 'closed' storage and rarely leave things lying in view which are not being used.
4. We have good 'closed' storage system, but items may be left in view and we should utilise storage more effectively.
3. We have a small 'closed' storage system, which is insufficient to keep all tools and so some need to be stored in view.
2. We have very little closed storage space and the room is moderately cluttered most of the time
1. We have no closed storage space and the room is highly cluttered most of the time.

P Light switches and electrical sockets can be a dangerous distraction. Many sockets are at waist height for ease of access, but can be a hazard because it's the perfect height for poking. Extension leads are a definite hazard!

5. All our sockets/light switches are covered or not accessible and no extension leads are required.
4. The majority of our sockets/light switches are covered or not accessible and no extension leads are required.
3. The majority of our sockets/light switches are covered or not accessible, and we use one extension lead.
2. Some of our sockets/light switches are covered or not accessible, and we use more than one extension lead.
1. Some of our sockets/light switches are covered but are at waist height and we use multiple extension leads.

Q Some learners find labels irresistible and highly distracting, others less so. However, the fewer labels, the better.

5. Labels are kept to a minimum and are those that learners access and use on a daily basis.
4. Labels are kept to a minimum level and are those that learners and staff access and use on a daily basis.
3. Labels are at a moderate level and are those that learners and staff access and use on a daily basis.
2. Labels are at a moderate level and are those that learners and staff access and use on a daily basis, as well as some with little/no functional value.
1. There are a high number of labels, many with little/no functional value.

R Many of our learners with sensory loss or autism use various methods of communication. It's always great to know the following: 'who is with me?' and 'what do I do when I get there?'

5. We use specific effective communication strategies which are appropriate to the learner, who is given plenty of processing time to understand

4. We have varied effective communication strategies which are appropriate to the learner, who is given some processing time to understand

3. We have varied effective communication strategies which are appropriate to the learner, which may be used inconsistently, with reduced processing time to understand.

2. We have varied communication strategies which may be appropriate to some learners, which may be used inconsistently, with little processing time to understand.

1. We use limited communication strategies, not specifically

Interpretation of the Environmental Audit Results

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
5																				
4																				
3																				
2				✓		✓							✓							
1	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

If your results look like the chart above, then you seriously need to think about some changes in your space. Your room is probably quite inappropriate and possibly a little dangerous.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4																				
3																				
2																				
1																				

If your results look like the chart above that you're either lying or you've done an incredible job with your room. I would not expect anybody to be able to score 5 all the way through.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
5			✓	✓				✓		✓		✓			✓		✓	✓		
4		✓				✓	✓		✓				✓	✓					✓	✓
3																				
2	✓																			
1					✓						✓					✓				

If your results look like the chart above then you are doing okay there is room for improvement in some areas and you may have one or two problems in the room which need attention, however on the whole the room is probably a bearable place to be.