

Community Outing Tips

Restaurant



Dining out can be a family treat and sometimes essential if planning a day out, a vacation, or special event. Whether you're eating at a fast food, casual dining, or a formal establishment, there are some obstacles that a person with autism might need to overcome to make dining out a pleasurable experience, such as finding food that they enjoy eating, waiting in line, and table manners.

Consider visiting restaurants at less busy times to adjust to their new surroundings. Depending on the establishment and your level of comfort, ask the manager for any special requests, most will accommodate your needs, if you ask. When possible practice at home; teach table etiquette and script a visit to a restaurant to aide in the process of eating out.

- Start with introducing the food by ordering "to go" and eat at home. This will help to establish which food(s) the person likes and/or dislikes.
- Order food from the drive thru or "to go", but eat inside the restaurant.
- A person with autism might get fidgety. If necessary, sit in a position where it is hard to climb out.
- Demonstrate throwing out trash in the proper receptacle.
- Practice waiting in line to order the food. You may want to have another adult or sibling join you at the restaurant to help wait at the table. Then, gradually have him or her wait with you.
- When you place the order, demonstrate how to place an order.
- Involve the person in the activity as much as possible. Once comfortable, have them place their order, carry the tray, or give the money to the cashier or waiter.
- Gradually move to busier times and different types of restaurants.

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