

# Tips for Autistic people in the workplace

Autistic people often have different social norms and expectations to non-Autistic people. This can mean that Autistic people can find it hard to understand unwritten social rules. For example, Autistic people might find small talk hard to engage with, or non-verbal cues challenging to understand.

This resource shares some tips for Autistic people in the workplace. These tips are designed to help you feel confident and know what to expect at work. Not all these tips may apply to you – it will depend on what kind of work you do. The tips that apply to you will also depend on whether you have told people at work that you are Autistic. If you have told people at work that you are Autistic, they may be able to provide you with supports. They might also be able to support the people that you work with to communicate with you in a way that works best for you. This might mean that you aren't expected to follow as many of the non-Autistic unwritten social rules.

## Getting along with the people you work with

Many different workplaces need you to talk to the people that you work with regularly. You might need to work with other people on projects or ask them questions. This means that getting along with the people that you work with is an important part of working.

The way that you get along with the people that you work with will be different depending on where you work. Some workplaces are more informal and relaxed, while others are more serious and formal. It can be hard to tell whether you are expected to act more formal or informal in your workplace.

You might find it helpful to ask someone you trust in your personal life whether they think that your workplace is more formal or informal. If you feel comfortable sharing that you are Autistic at work, you might also want to speak with your manager. They might be able to tell you whether your workplace is more relaxed or serious.

## Different expectations between non-Autistic and Autistic people

Sometimes non-Autistic people and Autistic people can find it hard to understand each other. This is because they both have different accepted social norms. Non-Autistic people might think that something is rude, while Autistic people might not. Or Autistic people might think something is rude, while non-Autistic people might not.

Here are some examples of some ways that non-Autistic and Autistic people can misunderstand each other.

<b>Non-Autistic people</b>	<b>Autistic people</b>
Non-Autistic people sometimes think that being too honest is rude. Instead, they might say some honest things, and say some compliments too.	Autistic people sometimes like to give and receive completely honest feedback.
Non-Autistic people often feel like it is rude for somebody to speak too much in a conversation. Instead, they often expect people to share a conversation equally.	Autistic people can find it challenging to identify how to share a conversation with another person. When the conversation is about something that they are interested in, they might speak a lot.
Non-Autistic people sometimes like to do “small talk”, where they talk about things that aren’t very intense. Sometimes non-Autistic people can think that talking a lot about intense topics at work is inappropriate.	Autistic people sometimes find small talk to be uninteresting or unnecessary. They might prefer to talk about more meaningful or interest-based things instead.

Yet, a lot of the unwritten social rules in workplaces are based on non-Autistic social norms. They might not all be relevant to an Autistic person. Autistic people shouldn’t be pressured to conform to non-Autistic social norms. If you feel comfortable to be yourself at work, you might follow Autistic social norms.

You should be able to be authentic to yourself, but not everyone is in a workplace that supports that. This might be because they haven’t told anyone they are Autistic, or it isn’t a very inclusive workplace. Non-inclusive workplaces might think that you are being rude by not following non-Autistic social norms. You might choose to follow non-Autistic social norms because you are worried that you will lose your job if you don’t. You have the choice over what social norms you follow or don’t follow.

Whether you are Autistic or not, it can make people feel comfortable if you:

- Say hello to the people that you work with when they arrive at work.
- Say goodbye to the people that you work with when they leave work.
- Give people enough room when you are standing with them or walking past them.
- Ask the people that you work with casual questions, like “Did you have a good weekend?”

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