

Inclusive Research with Autistic Young People: Advice from Young People

When carrying out research with autistic young people, it's important to use approaches that are flexible, inclusive, and shaped by the young people themselves. Here are some helpful ways to make research more accessible and meaningful.



1. Work Together from the Start

Involve autistic young people as co-researchers or advisors. Empower them to help decide the research questions and how the study should be done. Create advisory groups of autistic young people to give regular feedback and advice throughout the project.

2. Personalise the Process

Adapt the research to suit each young person's needs, interests, and preferences. When research topics feel relevant and personal, young people are often more motivated and engaged.

3. Help Participants Get Involved

Offer preparation sessions so participants know what to expect. Provide support, such as having someone available during activities if needed. Check in regularly to address any worries and offer fair compensation for their time and input.

4. Use Technology and Multimedia

Using apps, games, videos, or virtual reality can make research more engaging and accessible. These tools allow young people to take part in ways that suit them.

5. Be Open to Learning and Adapting

Keep learning about neurodiversity and listen to feedback from participants. Be ready to adjust your methods based on what works best for the young people involved.



6. Creative Approaches

Use creative methods like art, drawing, photography, or video to help participants share their thoughts and feelings in non-verbal ways, which can make participation more meaningful and comfortable.



7. Storytelling and Narrative Methods

Encourage young people to share their experiences through storytelling, writing, or storyboards. These approaches can offer a clear and structured way to express experiences, thoughts and feelings.

8. Create Comfortable, Sensory-Friendly Spaces

Think about lighting, noise levels, and seating to reduce sensory overload and make the research environment welcoming and calm.

9. Use Clear Communication and Structure

Provide information in different formats, written, verbal, or visual, so participants can choose what suits them. Use simple, clear language and structured activities with step-by-step instructions to reduce anxiety and build confidence.

10. Flexible, Adaptable Methods

Be willing to change your approach if needed. Offer breaks and adapt based on feedback to make sure participants feel comfortable and supported.

11. Respect Privacy and Consent

Make sure participants fully understand what the research involves and that they can leave at any time. Protect their privacy and carefully consider how research findings might affect the autistic community.

