



# Moorpark College ACCESS

## Autism Spectrum Disorder



(from the National Institute of Mental Health)

### Overview

**Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)** is a developmental disorder that affects communication and behavior.

Autism is known as a "spectrum" disorder because there is wide variation in the type and severity of symptoms people experience. ASD occurs in all ethnic, racial, and economic groups. Although ASD can be a lifelong disorder, treatments and services can improve a person's symptoms and ability to function.

### Possible challenges:

- **Difficulty with social communication and interaction**, such as trouble making and keeping friends, and misunderstanding another person's point of view or actions
- **Restricted interests/repetitive behaviors**, such as repeating words or phrases, having intense interests in certain topics, insistence on routine, and being more or less sensitive to sensory stimuli.
- Not all people with ASD will show all behaviors, but most will show several.

### Possible strengths:

- Being able to learn things in detail and remember information for long periods of time
- Being strong visual and auditory learners
- Excelling in math, science, music, or art

**NOTE:** Previously, people could be diagnosed with one of several separate conditions (Autistic disorder, Asperger's Syndrome, Pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS)). These separate conditions have now been combined into one diagnosis called "autism spectrum disorder."

### For more information:

National Institute of Mental Health

<https://bit.ly/2hEPe0l>

Kara Lybarger-Monson – Effective Teaching Strategies for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

<https://bit.ly/2MPRFMo>

Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN)

<https://bit.ly/2FfJSD0>

### Suggestions for instructors:

From Moorpark English Professor Kara Lybarger-Monson

- Be consistent with organization of class time and content.
- Minimize bright lights, loud sounds, and strong smells.
- Ask the student how you may clarify the material.
- In group settings, give each person in the group a task.
- If there are behavioral issues, explain to the student what is expected and suggest a behavioral modification.
- Type up the lecture or print the PowerPoint ahead of time and provide as a copy at the beginning of class or online so students may print it.
- Allow assignments to be typed.
- Provide ample time to complete quizzes and assignments in class.
- Provide the material through various modalities: Visual, auditory, and kinesthetic.
- As a general practice, create clear guidelines for expectations, use cues to transition between activities, repeat expectations, and be consistent.
- Refer the student to ACCESS.

**Common accommodations** are extended time for in-class essays, exams, and quizzes; alternate location for exams; recording of lectures; notetakers; text-to-speech and voice recognition computer systems.