



HOW TO PLAN THE PERFECT PARTY FOR KIDS WITH AUTISM!

Because autism touches everyone!



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By Karen L. Simmons, CEO [Autism Today](#)
and Susan M. Simmons
Co-founder, [Autism Today Party Supplies](#)



When it comes right down to it, kids with autism are just like every other kid. Let's help kids with autism through those challenges with the "perfect party for [kids with autism](#)" and help others along the way [understand autism](#).

Kids grow and learn in different ways - some can read at age 3, others not until third grade. Social graces have to be taught very carefully. For children on the autism spectrum these challenges are a little bigger.

Sometimes it is hard to tell that a child has autism, and at other times it is very clear. A child with autism struggles with these developmental issues on a continuing basis.

These five main challenges are:

- **Communication** - Most people equate a difficulty in speaking as a sign of autism. That is true in some cases, but not in all. Some children with autism talk just like you and me, but can have difficulty communicating their feelings or describing an event.
- **Sensory dysfunction** - Many children with autism hear, see, taste, and smell better than most people. "Sensory violation" is a term my good

friend Stephen Shore uses a lot when referring to offensive sounds, tastes, odors or even clothing!

- **Social skill deficits** - These challenges overlap, and difficulty in one area can affect others. The one constant is that children with autism have a difficult time making and keeping friends... and friends are the primary ingredient of a party!
- **Behavioural issues** - Since kids with autism like to do things over and over again, which is called perseveration (per-sev-er-a-shun) they have a very unique ability to develop their area of interest whether it is art, music, dance, acting, or even computers. It's important to incorporate their talents from the very beginning to help guide your child's life with the goal of helping them thrive and grow beyond their boundaries and into their greatest potential!
- **Physical challenges** - Children with autism are very often not real active or may be very clumsy. Social skill deficits often deter those with autism to engage in sports, because sports are competitive. This lack of physical activity often results in clumsiness.



When my son, Jonny was diagnosed with autism at 2 1/2, I asked the doctor what his future might look like. He said "you don't want to know" but I DID want to know and so does every other parent out there. That way we as parents can help guide our children and set the pathway for them to follow to achieve their best dreams, hopes and skill sets for the future.



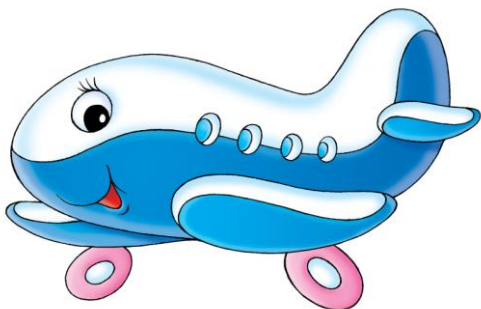
To begin, it's important to try to imagine what it's like to be a child with autism. So, I am going to ask you to take yourself back to when you were around the age of six. What was your favourite toy? Imagine for a moment that you are playing a game with your friends. To win your favourite toy, you have to walk across the room barefoot over ice cubes. When it is your turn, your friend puts duck tape over your mouth. Then, as you are crossing the room, firecrackers start exploding all around you, but you can't see where the noise is coming from. Now let's assess...

- How did you get across the ice? Did you walk on your toes to try to avoid contact with the cold, slippery surface? Do you

think you might be walking on your toes to avoid contact with the ice cubes?

- How did you feel when the sounds started coming from everywhere? Did you cover your ears?
- How did you feel when your friend put tape on your mouth? Were you frustrated because couldn't say what you're thinking or feeling?
- Were you laughing at the scene, and what other kids would look like? Would they be laughing at you?
- Would any (or all of these) agitate or embarrass you?

All of this sounds very frustrating, doesn't it? You have now walked in the shoes of a kid with autism. Kids with autism love parties, too, and by asking you to think about how the "little" things matter, we hope that you can find activities that are fun for EVERYONE.





Here are some important tips and guidelines when planning your

“perfect party for kids with autism”

- Give your child a voice. It is important for your child with autism to participate and see that his opinions and ideas matter. Get them involved in the beginning, whether it is choosing the colors they like, the party favours they want, or the people they'd like to invite. It helps them see the process from start to finish.
- Avoid surprises. A party is an "unknown" that can leave kids with autism feeling uneasy and lacking control. Many kids with autism are very visual. Write out a little story, or if your child doesn't read yet, put together a series of pictures or drawings to show what will happen the very day of the party, step by step. This way they will know what to expect and can plan it in their own minds. Surprises are not fun for kids on the autism spectrum.



- While you are inviting your child's friends, be sure to encourage the other children's parents not to be afraid of inviting your child just because he's different.
- Autism needs to be understood, not feared, and it's our job as parents to help this happen.
- Keep the guest list appropriate to the child's age. Remember, too many kids may be too much stimulation if your child is sensitive to it.
- Educate party guests (Sometimes parents come, too) prior to and during the party. It is through empathy, not sympathy that we begin to understand children with autism and their condition. It would be a good idea to print

something about autism in the party invitation so kids know what to expect. Here is an example:

" Dear Party Friend,

Your friend, Jonny, has a condition called autism (aw-tis-em). He's a great kid and may be very interested (and good) at art, music or computers. He sometimes acts different than you but his actions are nothing to be afraid of.

He may not look at you but that doesn't mean he doesn't see you out of the corner of his eye. It's nothing personal against you. He may seem far away, spin in circles or may not even talk to you but that doesn't mean he doesn't care or want to be your friend. Keep trying to find things in common with him and you will get to know a really great kid.

Sincerely,

Karen

Jonny's Mom"



- Make sure the party favours are not the loud, (in your face) type and that they don't make unexpected sounds. Kids with autism often times are very sensitive to sounds, loud, or unexpected noises.
- Select activities that are structured and predictable, not impromptu or spontaneous. Kids with autism like to know what's coming next and they thrive on structure.
- Plan activities or games that the children can do by themselves or as a group. Group activities can often be intimidating at the best of times for children with autism, as social interactions may be very challenging for most. If you do plan games, plan quiet ones for those who want to play and maybe some activity tables for those who do not want to play a game. Above all, plan activities that may not escalate into a lot of noise or commotion.

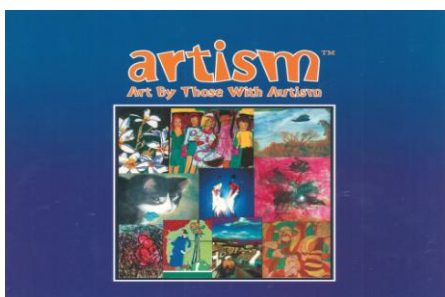


- Build the party menu carefully. Food allergies are prevalent in all communities. It is a good idea to ask about allergies before the party or ensure that there are sugar, wheat, gluten, dairy, and peanut free choices for everyone. You will have a much calmer party and everybody will have something to munch on. Besides, who says you can't break the norm by saying good-bye to traditional birthday cake and ice cream?
- It can be hard for kids to stay "in the moment" in any given social situation, especially when there's not much feedback from another child. In this case, you can help the regular kids engage with the child with autism by finding a common ground for them to share.
- Find a great strength the child with autism has to focus on and play it up. By doing so you will help his or her light shine and builds their self-esteem. Maybe she likes to draw. Build

the party around drawing. Perhaps he loves lining up trains. Expand his common interest and find engaging games for the other kids so they can play with him...with his trains. The ideas you can come up with are endless.



After we published the **Artism™** Art by those with Autism book I have witnessed many early artists become phenomenal artists as adults with high self-esteem. We will also be publishing a brand new art book in the near future so be sure to watch for it!



- Be sure to pass out this information to everyone you meet so they can learn what makes your child with autism 'tick'. This way we can raise awareness one party person at a time.



Most importantly, have fun with this party plan. By following these tips and guidelines, you will make it an absolutely perfect party for your child with autism for years to come.

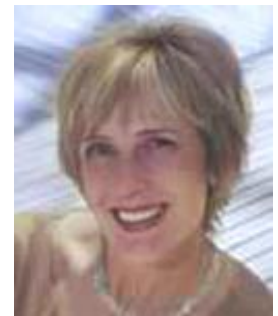
I invite YOU
to celebrate a "perfect party" with
your child with autism!



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For all your "party needs"

*Karen L. Simmons, CEO Autism Today, Co-author
"Chicken Soup for the Soul, Children with
Special Needs"*



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