

Could it be more than "shy" or "just particular"?

A parent noticing tool for social communication, sensory, and flexibility patterns. Not a diagnosis, but a starting point for a conversation with a professional.

This is not a diagnostic tool. Autism can only be diagnosed by a qualified professional, such as a developmental paediatrician, psychiatrist, or psychologist, through a proper clinical assessment, usually involving direct observation of your child. This checklist simply helps you notice patterns worth discussing. Autism looks different in every child, and many traits here also appear on their own without autism being involved.

For each item, mark how often it applies to your child right now: Never · Rarely · Sometimes · Often · Very often.

Item	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often
SOCIAL COMMUNICATION					
Limited eye contact, or eye contact that feels effortful rather than natural	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Doesn't consistently respond to their name being called, even when hearing is fine	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Difficulty reading facial expressions, tone of voice, or body language	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Conversation tends to be one-directional, talking <i>at</i> rather than <i>with</i> , often about a favourite topic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SOCIAL INTERACTION & RELATIONSHIPS					
Struggles to make or keep friendships at a level expected for their age	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Prefers to play alone, or plays alongside others rather than with them	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Doesn't seem to notice, or seems unbothered by, when a peer is upset or excluded	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
RESTRICTED & REPETITIVE BEHAVIOURS					
Strong, narrow interests that take up a lot of their time and conversation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Repetitive movements: hand-flapping, rocking, spinning, or lining things up	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Strong need for sameness. Becomes very distressed by small changes in routine or environment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SENSORY RESPONSES					
Unusually strong reactions to certain sounds, lights, textures, tastes, or smells	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Seeks out intense sensory input: spinning, crashing into things, staring at lights or moving objects	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
LANGUAGE & FLEXIBILITY					
Language delay, unusual speech patterns, or very literal understanding of what's said	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Difficulty coping with unstructured or unpredictable situations, like a substitute teacher or a change of plan	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

What to do with your answers

There's no score or cut-off here. This isn't that kind of tool. What matters more is the overall pattern: how many items you marked "Often" or "Very often", whether they show up across more than one setting (home and school or childcare), and whether they've been consistent over time rather than a short phase. That pattern is what's worth bringing to a professional.

Important: This checklist is based on general developmental screening concepts and parent-reported patterns. It is **not a diagnosis or a substitute for a professional clinical assessment**. If you have concerns about your child's development, please speak to a qualified professional.

If this feels familiar: *what can help* at home

You don't need a diagnosis to start trying these. Pick one or two and give them a real two-week trial before judging whether they're working.

Communication and change

Make communication more predictable

- Use short, clear, literal language. Avoid sarcasm or idioms like "pull your socks up"
- Give extra processing time after a question before repeating or rephrasing it
- Support spoken instructions with pictures, written steps, or objects where possible

Prepare for change ahead of time

- Use a visual schedule so your child can see what's coming, in order
- Give advance warning before transitions: "5 more minutes, then bath time"
- When a change is unavoidable, explain it as early and concretely as you can

Sensory needs and connection

Respect the sensory system

- Notice and reduce specific triggers where you can: certain fabrics, noise levels, lighting
- Offer sensory tools that help them regulate: noise-cancelling headphones, a weighted lap pad, a fidget
- Build in movement or sensory breaks before situations that are usually harder

Support social connection on their terms

- Let shared special interests be the entry point for friendships, not a distraction from them
- Practise specific social scripts for common situations: greeting a friend, asking to join a game
- Value parallel play and quieter forms of connection as real friendship, not a lesser version of it

A note on meltdowns: a meltdown from sensory or change overload is different from defiance. In the moment, reducing input and giving space usually helps more than reasoning or consequences.

Wondering about support at school and in exams? Strugglesmart helps parents check reports and plan exam Access Arrangements for PSLE and GCE, such as a separate room or extra time, in English or 华文.

Free first call: strugglesmart.sg/contact

More free parent checklists and toolkits: strugglesmart.sg/toolkits

Considering a formal assessment? In Singapore, a reasonable starting point is your child's paediatrician or polyclinic doctor, who can refer you to a developmental paediatrician, a Child Development Clinic, or a psychologist for a proper autism assessment. Early intervention services can often begin support even while a formal assessment is in progress. It's worth asking your doctor about this option too.

A reminder: these are general suggestions, not a treatment plan. If you have concerns about your child's development, please speak to a qualified professional.