

Sue Larkey ✓  
**TOP TIPS**

# Key Tips to Engage in Learning:

- Top 12 Tips to Set Up for Success
- Using Sensory Toys to Improve Learning and Behaviour
- Different Ways of Teaching
- Use Rewards and Special Interests to Motivate and Engage in Learning
- 12 Top Tips to Keeping on Task
- Why and How to Use Visuals
- 9 Tips to Facilitate Social Skills Activities
- Dysgraphia and Typing
- 14 Key Strategies for Managing iPads and Tablets

Strategies for school and home for children with autism spectrum disorder, ADD, ADHD, ODD and other developmental delays.

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# Top 12 Tips to Set Up for Success

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1. Understand the child's difference (strengths and challenges), accept their different way of thinking, learning, socialising, etc .
2. Break it down. Break tasks down into smaller parts and give them each step sequentially. If possible, give them a checklist to mark off as they do each step. Do NOT expect the children to multitask! Allow them extra time to get it done, but let them finish! It is important to finish one task before going to another.
3. Slow it down. Be aware of communication difficulties. Allow time to process verbal information, use visuals, and don't overload them with verbal information.
4. Use their special interests to motivate and engage – their strengths are motivated by their interest.
5. Show them what is expected and what is happening, then they have less need to fight for control (i.e. schedules, routines, timers).
6. Be careful how you use words, their literalness can mean they misunderstand you. Avoid words like 'could', 'would', 'can' as they perceive them as a choice, e.g. "Can you start work" can be seen as a choice.
7. Use visuals to support learning: schedules, photos, pictures, symbols, timetables, highlight key information, mind maps, etc.
8. Prepare by previewing. If possible 'preview' the learning ahead of time, to give a mental framework of what is being presented or what is next.
9. Check in regularly – don't wait for the student to ask for help – check in (learning, social and behaviour).
10. Computers and iPads are enabling for so many people with ASD, they can help build connections and confidence.
11. They find it hard to see things from other people's perspective. This is known as 'theory of mind'. They might also find it hard to understand and predict other people's behaviour, and to understand how their behaviour affects others.
12. They often find it hard to recognise facial expressions and the emotions behind them. They may miss facial cues from adults about behaviour, or social cues from peers.

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

### The Ultimate Guide to School and Home

By Sue Larkey and Anna Tullemans



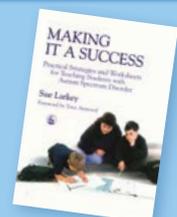
### The Essential Guide to Secondary School

By Sue Larkey and Anna Tullemans



### Making it a Success

By Sue Larkey



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# Using Sensory Toys to Improve Learning and Behaviour

Children with a autism spectrum disorder (ASD) often seek out sensory activities, e.g. chewing, twirling, and fidgeting. They find specific sensory experiences calming, e.g. rocking, flicking, visual patterns, flapping. Holding an object in their hands can often enhance learning. For example, if given a sensory toy to hold at mat time a child can sit for longer, concentrate better, be less disruptive to peers, is calmer and has reduced anxiety levels. Sensory toys can also replace inappropriate behaviours.

## Is there one MAGIC WAND to improve learning and behaviour?

So many teachers and parents of children with ASD ask me this question. The simple answer is no, because a combination of strategies is required, but if there was ONE idea that makes a big difference and is so easy to use it would be using what is called a fidget toy. The irony is that it is the strategy that is most resisted by educators.

A small 'fidget toy' in the hand of a majority of children with ASD will dramatically improve their learning and behaviour.

I acknowledge that the idea that playing with a 'toy' improving concentration is the opposite experience for teachers and parents with non-ASD children.

For children with ASD this strategy can be a MAGIC WAND. It calms them, reduces stress, and reduces distractions, therefore increasing learning readiness and promoting good behaviour. Many children with ASD seek movement to calm and process, by allowing the child to actually move their fingers using a "fidget toy" it actually increases learning.

## A good indicator of whether a child needs fidget toys is "WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU REMOVE THEM?"

If you remove the toy and you see other behaviours emerge this indicates the child actually "seeks" this and "needs" it. For example, the behaviours you will see could include:

- Will they pick their fingers?
- Will they chew their collar or hat string?
- Will they start moving their legs, body?
- Will they be easily distracted by other children?

## Many students with ASD actually listen and concentrate BEST with a sensory toy!

Reminder: Have rules around sensory toys. Have set times they put in their pocket, on desk, in their hands etc.



## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

### Practical Sensory Programmes

By Sue Larkey



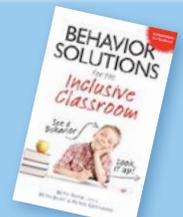
### The Kids' Guide to Staying Awesome and In Control

By Lauren Brukner



### Behaviour Solutions

By Beth Aune, Beth Burt and Peter Gennaro



# Different Ways of Teaching

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There is a variety of ways that an adult can implement to teach a child during the day. Using a combination of all these different forms of teaching each day will provide the child with a multitude of learning opportunities.

## Direct Teaching:

This is a highly structured approach that initially takes place at a table in an environment where distractions have been minimised; e.g. T.V. is off. As the child's attention to task and concentration span develop move to other environments. Individual programmes for a child could be addressed through Direct Teaching.

## Engineered Situations:

These are situations that you deliberately set-up, e.g. having the door locked when you are going out, waiting for the child to look and vocalise (you model 'open') before you open the door. Place things out of the child's reach to encourage pointing and vocalisation.

## Incidental Teaching:

Follow the child's lead; respond as situations occur during the day; e.g. name household objects as you use them e.g. "brush"; verbalise activities "Mummy's sweeping the floor"; and general observations like when hanging the washing comment on items of clothing and to whom they belong.

## Activity Based Instruction:

Let the child help you make a sandwich; rake the leaves, etc.

## Make Learning Fun:

Select activities that you know the child really enjoys. The easiest way to do this is watch what they are already engaging in and then be creative how you can incorporate into specific learning eg Literacy, Maths etc can be taught at lunchtime, bath time, playground, etc.

## Adapt Activities for Success:

It is very important to adapt the tasks to the individual child's learning style and strengths. Always think about the AIM of the activity. It is best to avoid situations that will distract them from engaging and participating in the core aim and those that cause anxiety and stress. For example, if they like colouring in and don't like cutting – your aim is counting do lots of colouring activities and avoid cutting.

## Select the Right Time and Place to Teach:

Finding the right moment to teach is just like taking a photo. If you are one second late it can be an awful photo – eyes shut, funny face. Select the correct moment and it is perfect! When teaching look for those perfect moments to teach. This will ensure great outcomes and everyone has fun, which will also mean the child will want to repeat!!

The "click" of the camera button captures the perfect action shot...



... so find the perfect moment to teach! Observe the child, get to notice the signs for that perfect moment!

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

### Practical Communication Programmes

By Jo Adkins and Sue Larkey



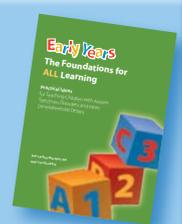
### The Ultimate Guide to School and Home

By Sue Larkey and Anna Tulleman



### The Early Years: Foundations for All Learning

By Sue Larkey and Gay von Ess



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# Use Rewards and Special Interests to Motivate and Engage in Learning

Rewards are an important element of all teaching programmes. Children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) need to understand the functionality of learning and have a motivator to learn. Self motivation is very difficult for someone with ASD especially when they can't see the 'payoff' at the end. Having a special goal to work towards is often the best motivator.

## The goal:

- Must be easy to reach.
- Should be small achievable steps rather than one huge step.
- Needs to have meaning to the ASD individual.
- Should be very clear what is expected, remember these children are literal so need specific clear expectations. i.e. Avoid goals like "do work" instead say "1 page of work; 10 questions; 100 words; read 10 pages".

## Ideas to try:

Use a motivator as a:

- Reward for work completed.
- Reward for time on task.
- Down time/quiet time.

The most useful motivator is usually access to their special interest/obsession. For some children their special interests can change daily, others can have the same interest for years.

Special interests can be used in many ways. Here are some examples on how to use special interests:

- Reading about favourite subject/special interest.
- Talking about favourite subject (this must be time limited).
- Access to favourite internet site/YouTube/iPad.

Children with ASD often cannot be bothered with skills they do not see the functionality to do and can take the attitude 'why bother'. By using their interests for learning or rewarding with their interests you will increase engagement and participation.

## Word of warning: NEVER use a child's special interest as a punishment

If you take away their special interest and use it as a punishment it rarely works as a behaviour modification method and could result in escalating behaviours. It is better to use as a reward, e.g. when you have achieved x, you can have y.

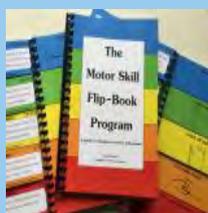
My Name is .....

Now

Next

Later

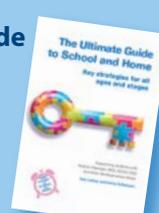
## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES



**The Motor Skill Flip-Book Program**  
By Sally McNamara

**The Ultimate Guide to School and Home**

By Sue Larkey and Anna Tullemans



**Teacher Assistants Big Red Book of Ideas**

By Sue Larkey and Anna Tullemans





# 12 Top Tips To Keeping On Task

Use these **12 tips** to support completion of tasks in the set time.

1. Take time to observe the student and environment to identify the barriers to completing tasks.
2. Adapt tasks before the activity.
3. Encourage responses (whether right or wrong, do not constantly correct).
4. Plan to have text books out, and examples to show them.
5. Organisation. For example: have pencil sharp and ready, page ruled up, book opened to correct page etc.
6. Give a preventative break during the task.
7. Limit choices.
8. Create a quiet area for them to work (collaborative tables have limitations).
9. Highlight the easy parts first, so they don't get stuck on "difficult parts" etc.
10. Review environmental factors.
11. Reduce frustration.
12. Ensure clear instructions.

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

### The Ultimate Guide to School and Home

By Sue Larkey and Anna Tullemans



### Teacher Assistants Big Blue Book of Ideas

By Sue Larkey and Anna Tullemans



### Teacher Assistants Big Red Book of Ideas

By Sue Larkey and Anna Tullemans





# Why and How to Use Visuals

## Why:

- Most children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) have strengths in visual areas compared to other areas.
- Up to 80% of families have their child's (with ASD) hearing test first because of delays in language development. Children with ASD can hear but they can't process verbal language.
- A symbol or picture remains constant long after the word or sign has been completed.
- People with ASD tell us language is confusing. Temple Grandin, a well-known American with ASD reports "I think in pictures."
- Sensory processing difficulties are part of ASD so it makes sense to support one sensory input system (i.e. hearing) with another – sight.

## How:

- Visuals include: real objects, parts of objects or remnants (e.g. empty packet of sultanas); photographs of the actual object, photographs of similar objects, drawings, computer generated symbols, (e.g. Boardmaker, Pics for PECS symbols) and words. Even the McDonalds' golden arches are a visual, and one that every child seems to know!
- Your child's age and ability will be the determining factor when deciding what type of visual support to use. Generally very young children and those who have additional difficulties need visuals that most closely resemble the actual object. These children may respond best when you show them the car keys rather than a Boardmaker symbol of a car. It is easier to use photos or symbols than carry round bags of objects. However, if they don't have meaning for your child at this point remnants or objects are fine.
- Always couple visuals with speech. They are an aid to help you understand spoken language, not a substitute.
- Be eclectic. You do not need to only use one type of visual. You can still use objects even if your child recognises symbols.
- Always print the name of the visual at the top. This will ensure that everyone calls the object the same thing (is it a mug or a cup?) and as words are only another visual code your child might crack this code as well!
- To be valuable visuals must be accessible. Keep them near where you are likely to use them – on the fridge or somewhere else handy in the kitchen; in the toilet; near the front door etc. Put a few key symbols on your key ring (finish, toilet, car, home, etc.).
- Wait! Like all communication you need to allow the child time to process and point.
- Persevere. Your child may need many trials before he makes the connection between the visual and the real object.
- Speak to your speech pathologist about introducing your child to PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System).

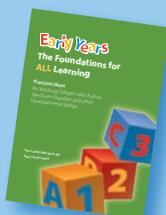
## Remember:

- Visuals need to be paired with looking at the other person to be useful communication.
- All visuals should be accompanied by speech.
- Keep visuals in place even after your child has learnt to talk.

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

### The Early Years: Foundations for All Learning

By Sue Larkey and  
Gay von Ess



### Practical Communication Programmes

By Jo Adkins  
and Sue Larkey





# 9 Tips to Facilitate Social Skills Activities

1. Adapt activities to REAL people and places they know. Imagine you are talking to teacher, friend, name a specific student – include real names of people they know.
2. Give the student a formula to follow. For example, have ready-made photos to show the students situations and what to do!.
3. Repeat with slightly different variations. (The Socially Speaking Board Game is a wonderful way to do this).
4. Make quick, fun and repetitive.
5. Tell what to do, not what NOT to do. Instead of “NO JAMES it is not your turn,” say “James wait, Sarah first”.
6. Catch doing “the right thing!” AND reward.
7. Do not assume they will generalise, they need to practice in different environments.
8. Engage PEERS as they can be great role models and encourage students in a range of situations.
9. PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE.



The Socially Speaking Board Game comes with fantastic cards of different scenarios. You could use these as a game for the whole class with a partner. Here are 3 examples of the cards.

“Ask what they like doing after school”

First ask sitting too close to person  
Ask again, sitting at right distance  
Which is better and why?”

“You know the teacher asked you to take something to school tomorrow, but you have forgotten what it was. Phone a friend to find out.”

“A group of your friends is playing a maths game. You would like to join in. What could you say to join them?”

Another great activity from the Socially Speaking Board Game is saying “I have peas for tea” in a range of different emotions. These include: scared, surprised, excited, angry. This is a great quick activity to do with the whole class. For parents, this is a fun car activity too!

## **FREE DR. TONY ATWOOD WEBINAR 35MIN**

**What you'll learn in this free webinar:**

- ✓ What is ASD
- ✓ DSM-5
- ✓ The 7 Parts of Criteria for Diagnosis
- ✓ Girls & Women with ASD

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# Dysgraphia and Typing

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**Dysgraphia** is a deficiency in the ability to write, regardless of the ability to read, not due to intellectual impairment. It is known to be associated with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and ADHD. Some key facts about children with Dysgraphia:

- Can usually write on some level, but often lack motor coordination.
- May find other fine motor tasks such as tying shoes difficult, though often does not affect all fine motor skills.
- Can lack basic spelling skills (for example, having difficulties with the letters p, q, b, and d).
- Often will write the wrong word when trying to formulate thoughts (on paper).
- Generally emerges when the child is first introduced to writing. The child may make inappropriately sized and spaced letters, or write wrong or misspelled words despite thorough instruction.

For children with ASD it can take a HUGE amount of energy and effort to write. It can be extremely frustrating for them as they know what they want to write and how it should look but they do not have the skills to put it on paper as fast as their brain works!

Children frustrated by lack of control of their pencil will start to avoid writing and start using inappropriate behaviours to 'get out of' doing their work. Anything we can do to improve fine motor control, build strength and reduce the frustration of the child is essential – and Pencil Grips are one way of doing this. The Pencil Grip is a sought after range of ergonomic designed writing aids suitable

for any user or writing instrument, whether for right or left handed use, these grips position the fingers comfortably and correctly position for easy writing.

The other solution is to allow children to use computers and put in place the appropriate supports for fine motor skills. Often children with ASD get so tired and frustrated when doing writing tasks, they prefer computers because less fine motor skills are required.

**Typing** is a useful skill for children to learn from an early age with the long term goal of children being literate and able to communicate through written words if speech does fail to come. You can start teaching typing by having the child find letters of the alphabet on the keyboard. Build up to two, three and four letter words – using words of familiar or favourite things.

Literacy combined with typing opens up the world of communication for older children. Once literate, even a non-verbal child can freely communicate their thoughts, feelings and questions if they have a keyboard available. Simple portable keyboards made of paper or card can be transported anywhere.

## **FREE SUE LARKEY WEBINAR 40MIN**

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### **What you'll learn in this course:**

- ✓ **Increased Understanding of How Children/Student with ASD Learn.**
- ✓ **How to Increase Socialisation**
- ✓ **Key Strategies to Reduce Anxiety**
- ✓ **At least 3 Ideas to Implement to Make a Difference in Your Classroom or Home**

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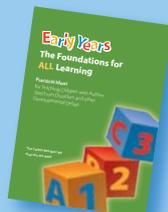
# 14 Key Strategies for Managing iPads and Tablets

1. Decide if your goal(s) are education, communication, entertainment, motivation, organisation and/or relaxation.
2. Establish rules and put boundaries in place around their use to ensure it is used appropriately. Use the settings on the iPad which has inbuilt capabilities to restrict the users access. iPads must be monitored to achieve the best outcomes. Have rules, routines/schedules around when and what they will be doing on the iPad.
3. They will not like stopping in the middle of a game so it is important you can save games, or they learn to check how long a game is before they start it.
4. Even if bought primarily for your child, refer to the iPad as yours. This makes it easier to control access to the iPad as it appears not to belong to the child. However, if the iPad is being used as a communication device the child needs access to it at all times. Consider having rules about when and where they can access the iPad. Many families have a rule where it goes at bedtime.
5. Put Apps into categories 'Home', 'School', 'English', 'Maths', 'Games' as many children see the iPad as 'fun' they can't always distinguish between a game and an educational tool.
6. Choose Apps that complement the child's IEP (Individual Education Plan) – the iPad is an ideal way of reinforcing school learning as well as providing opportunities for other learning. See book Apps for Autism which saves hours of time looking for Apps and wasting money on wrong Apps. The book reviews the best Apps and how can they be used for learning.
7. Download the Apps from iTunes onto your main computer. Sync across to the iPad. You can then control how many your child has access to at any one time.
8. Don't assume that because the name Autism appears in the title or the App is listed in a list of Apps for autism that the App is suitable for children on the spectrum. It may just be a marketing tool.
9. Ensure the student can transfer skills from iPad to paper. If they are learning times tables or spelling words ensure they can do them in their workbook as well.
10. Use the iPad to teach social skills – turn taking, losing games, use the camera to video social skills.
11. Use the 'lock' function to stop them consistently clicking out of Apps they don't want to do. Especially when using for educational purposes.
12. Use for building skills and accommodating – handwriting, voice recording, etc.
13. Use a stylus for writing activities on the iPad. AluPen is a chunky hexagonal pencil-like stylus; thinner styluses are available for older children.
14. Buy a strong case. There are a number available. Griffin Survivor, Otterbox, Koosh and Lifeproof.

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

### The Early Years: Foundations for All Learning

By Sue Larkey and  
Gay von Ess



### Developing Social Skills

By Sue Larkey and  
Gay von Ess



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