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Rigid routines

Points to note

- Children with autism can build up rigid routines for themselves because they become stressed when they don't know what might happen next. These routines help to relieve their anxiety.
- Attempts to stop or modify these routines are likely to be met with great resistance.

What you can do

- While these rituals may seem odd or bizarre, the behaviour does serve a purpose. Only try to change routines that interfere with the child's learning or the learning of others, or behaviour that is offensive.
- It will be necessary to conduct a review of the child's stress level and look at ways of reducing his stress before trying to change any behaviour.
- One way to reduce stress is to use schedules. See [Visual Schedules](#) for more information.
- It is a good idea to allow for some spontaneity and flexibility within the structure and routine of classroom activities. It is good for children to learn to cope with minor changes, however not all will be able to do so. If you want to try this, use a large exclamation mark on a visual schedule or on the blackboard. Tell the child that this means a surprise and emphasise that it will be lots of fun! Make sure it is an activity that you know the child will enjoy.