

## **www.autismhelp.info**

### **Rigid routines**

#### **Points to note**

- A child with autism can build up rigid routines for himself because he becomes stressed when he doesn't know what will happen next. These routines help to relieve his anxiety. When things happen in a set order, he gets a sense of comfort and security. Children can become hooked into a routine that is very hard to break. 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 that of others, or behaviour that is offensive.
- It will be necessary to conduct a review of the student's stress level and look at ways of reducing his stress before trying to change any behaviour.
- One way to reduce stress about daily routines is to use schedules. See [Visual Schedules](#) for more information.
- 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 in a supportive environment, however not all will be able to cope with this. If you want to try this, use a large exclamation mark on a visual schedule or on the blackboard. Tell the student 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. (However, avoid telling the child that the unplanned activity will *a/ways* be fun, so that he can learn to cope with unplanned activities that may not be so enjoyable.)