

Autism: A Guide for Further Education Students



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Starting College

Starting College

Advice sheet for students

Starting college is exciting but you may also be worried because it is a new experience.

It may help if you work out what you are going to do before you start. Lots of students tell us that the most difficult times for them in college is when they are not in 'lessons' or have unstructured time.

So we have put together some tips that you may find helpful.

Remember to use your Action Plan/Check List to help you to know:

- **Where to go**
- **Who can help**
- **What you will need**

Students have told us that what has helped them is:

- Having information that can help them plan and know what they are meant to do.
- Having time before and after 'lessons' to discuss what has happened that day and any concerns or worries they might have with the work or the lesson.
- Having time to process information and being able to ask if they are not sure. It will help if you know who to ask if you are not sure about something.
- The college being flexible around break times so that they can go to the canteen or take breaks at quieter times. If this is worrying you, speak to your Tutor or Mentor.
- Having a '**safe space**' to:
 - Chill out
 - Eat lunch
 - Go to if it is too noisy or bright
 - Go to when they are not in 'lessons'. This will help students to know exactly what they are going to do all day.
 - Meet up with other students around common interests.
 - Work on their own.

Appendix 1 – Student Action Plan /Check List

Student action plan /check list for college

Moving from school to college can be daunting, however in this guide you will find information and questions to help you get prepared for college. The action plan/check list is split into 3 sections; 'Before starting college', 'During college' and 'After college'. Answer the questions and fill in the activities, when you get to college. Make sure the staff have gone through this action plan/check list with you to make sure you get all the help you need.

This action plan/check list can go with the other paperwork you might have to take to college, or you might get from college.

Before starting college

What course to pick?

Choosing a course can be difficult, however, things that you should consider include;

What do you enjoy doing? *Answer in the box*

Tick the box if the answer is 'yes'

Is there a course which includes this?

Tick the box if the answer is 'yes'

Have you got the right qualifications to get onto the course?.....

What job would you like to do in the future? *Answer in the box*

Tick the box if the answer is 'yes'

Does the course you want to do help you towards doing the job you would like to do?.....

If you have ticked each of the boxes, the course you're looking at is probably right for you.

What college to pick?

Sometimes there might be more than one college that does the course you want to do, it's worth going to visit each of the colleges you might go to.

Try considering the following questions when deciding which college to go to;

How far are you happy to travel? It might be easier for some people to keep travel time short and so choose the college closest to their home, however you may feel comfortable with travelling further.

Tick the box for the travel time you're comfortable with

I don't want to travel very far, between 1-20 minutes
between home and the college

I don't mind travelling a little bit, between 21-40 minutes
between home and college

I don't mind travelling for longer, 40 minutes or longer
between home and college

Circle your answer to this question

Do you like the college building?

You will be spending a lot of time in the college building , so try and pick the college you are most comfortable in YES or NO

Circle your answer to this question

Do you like the lecturers?

If you get a chance to meet the lecturers in open days, it's worth choosing a college where you get along with the lecturers YES or NO

Circle your answer to this question

Can the college support services meet the needs of your condition?

We all need help sometimes, so it is worth considering whether you like the student support services YES or NO

Try to find a college that is within the travel time you prefer, and that you can answer yes to the questions.

How do I prepare for college?

Once you've found a course and picked a college it's time to start preparing for the start of term.

Have you got all of your kit? *Tick the box when you have the items*

Laptop	
Pens, pencils, rubbers, ruler, sharpener.	
Pencil case	
Bag	
Any textbooks suggested by the college	

If you aren't sure what you need to get before starting college, contact the person handling your admission and ask what you need to bring.

Sometimes you might need to do some reading relevant to your course before the start of term.

Tick the box if the answer is yes

Have you asked the college if you need to do any reading to prepare for your course?

If there is reading you need to do before starting college, have you done the reading??

Getting used to the college building can be difficult, but you can ask if you can visit the college more than once before term if that would help you.

Circle your answer to this question

Would you like to visit the college building before the start of term? YES or NO

Circle your answer to this question

Do you know how to arrange visiting the training provider and/or workplace before you start? YES or NO

If the answer is NO, ring or email the college and ask how you can arrange this.

Circle your answer to this question

Have you visited the college and feel comfortable with the building? YES or NO

Make sure you know how you are going to get to and from college.

Circle your answer to this question

Which of these are you getting to college by :

- College bus
- Car
- Public transport (trains or buses for example)
- Special transport

Answer in the box

What time do you have to leave in the morning?

How long will it take to get to college?

What time do you leave college in the afternoon?

How long will it take to get home?

Planning your new routine

It can be helpful to know what your routine will be when you're in training/work before you start. To prepare for the new routine you will be following during training/work, you might want to start following a similar routine for a few weeks before you start.

Fill in this general routine timetable to help you plan the structure of your day. This timetable doesn't include your lessons only the basic daily routine.

Activity	Time
Wake up	
Leave the house	
Start travelling to college	
College starts	
Lunchtime	
College ends	
Start travelling home	
Arrive home	
Go to sleep	

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During College

During College

Organising your work

There are things you and your Mentor or Tutor can do to help you manage your work:

- Ask for printed notes or handouts. Especially if you find it hard to take notes.
- Make sure that you have a timetable that is up to date and easy to understand. You can ask your Mentor or Tutor to help you with this.
- Ask your Tutor to let you know in plenty of time if there are any changes and agree how you want to be notified e.g. by text.
- Ask for a set of rules at the start of the course e.g. how to hand in work. If you do not understand something, ask your Mentor or Tutor to explain it to you.
- Make sure that you have a plan and you know when you have to complete tasks. Plan your meetings with your Tutor so you can go over things – you may not need to carry on having a weekly meeting once you have got used to college.

Organising your work

- Make sure that your hand in dates are clear and written in a diary, you can set reminders on your phone.
- It is hard to prioritise work. What can help is to make a to do list each week and rank each task – the most important being first etc. This may take some practice and you may want to ask your Mentor or Tutor for some help at first. You may want to use an app such as Evernote to keep your to do lists and reminders.
- Try to organise your work. Using an e portfolio may be the best way to work so that you have it all in one place – you may also find colour coding any course material and work helpful.
- If you require any additional support, let your Tutor/Assessor know and they will be able to let you know what support is available. For example, there may be Essential Skills workshops you can book on to.
- You may also find it helpful to have a different colour file for each subject at home but bring in a cardboard folder to college. If your cardboard folder is the same colour as your 'home' file then it is easier to organise your work as you can put any loose papers in your cardboard file at college and sort them out at home.
- If possible print the on the same coloured paper for a task e.g. homework is always on green paper.

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Organising your work *continued . . .*

- If you require any additional support, let your Tutor know and they will be able to let you know what support is available.
- College organises study skills sessions these can be really useful ask your Mentor or Tutor if there are any you could attend.
- A tick sheet for work that needs to be completed can be really useful – ask your Tutor/Assessor to support you in this way.
- For independent work, make sure that you have understood what the Tutor/Assessor expects and when they want you to complete the tasks. It can be useful to create a timetable to plan how and when you will complete the work.
- We all make mistakes and sometimes you will in your work. It is hard not to get upset but the Tutor/Assessor will understand and give you practical help on how to get it right next time.

Understanding the task

It is important that to do your best you understand what you are expected to do.

- If you find the question difficult to understand ask your Mentor or Tutor to help you break it down into manageable sections. Using flow charts can be really helpful.
- Ask for the instructions to be in writing as it may be difficult to remember verbal instructions especially if you have to concentrate on something else whilst the Tutor is speaking.
- Ask for the clear limit of what is expected of you in an answer and that the task is very specific e.g. rather than 'write everything you know about the 1st World War' ask for the question to be worded to narrow down the response and answer the questions e.g. 'give the 10 main reasons why the 1st World War started'.
- Ask your Mentor or Tutor to make sure that the Training Provider knows if you need extra time to complete a task.

More detailed advice can be found under the **Answering questions, Essay Writing and Exam preparations** sections of this guide.

Answering Questions

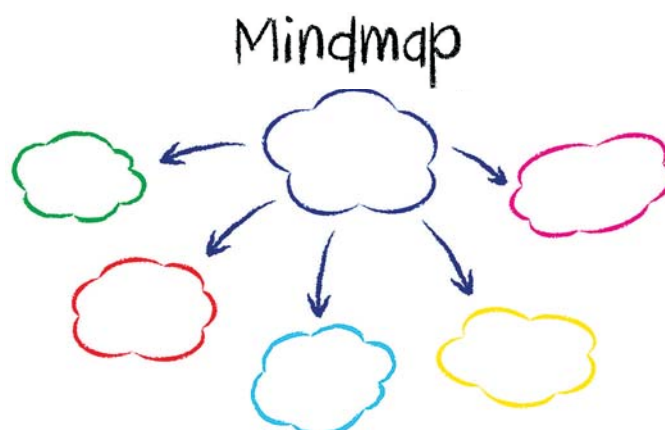
Sometimes a question looks really hard and it's difficult to know where to start. These are some tips on how to approach questions. Not all of them will work for you and they work best when you have time to think about it. If you get used to techniques like these you will find it easier to find answers when you have less time such as in exams.

First, make sure you understand the question, you can try:-

- **Putting it into your own words**
- **What sort of answer will it be?**
 - A number?
 - Does the number have units eg Kg or Km?
 - Is there a clue in the question eg velocity, mass?
 - A formula?
 - A written description?
- **Make a verbal sketch, jot down:**
 - What are the key facts in the question? How many? How far?
 - What do you need to find out?
 - What kind of problem is it, have I done one like it before? How did I solve that one?
 - Can you simplify the problem? Turn it from words into a formula?
- **Make an actual sketch**
 - Draw little cars or stick figures so you can see how one part relates to another.
 - Do they travel, what direction, is there a timeline?
 - Mark on the sketch what you know, what you can work out and what you need to find out.
- **What information do you need?**
 - What notes or textbooks can help?
 - What theories or formulae apply?

You could try a Mindmap

Put your problem in the centre and put what you know around it. This might help you realise just how much you already know and show up connections you hadn't thought of.



Decide on a strategy

- There will be formulae, tools, methods that can be applied to the kind of problem set. Having worked to understand the question gives clues to the steps to solve it.
- Have you done one like it before, can one of those solutions help?
- In what ways is this question different to ones you've done before? How does that make the way to solve it different?
- Jot down possible methods, what are the advantages/disadvantages of each?
- Make a decision and apply it to test it out.

Having trouble finding a solution

Simplify the problem if you can

- Take away unnecessary details, tease out the essential from the background confusion.
- Make some reasonable assumptions
 - It's a car it can't go faster than
 - the profit in 1 year will be less than the capital.
- Can you think of any real life examples?
That might help to visualise the problem.

Work through step by step, check and present the answer

- Especially with maths and science problems make sure you write out the steps. This helps to check for errors and you may be given marks for method even if the arithmetic has gone wrong.
- Check back over your work.
- Check each step of any calculation for errors.
- Write answers clearly and don't forget to include units eg Kg or Cm.

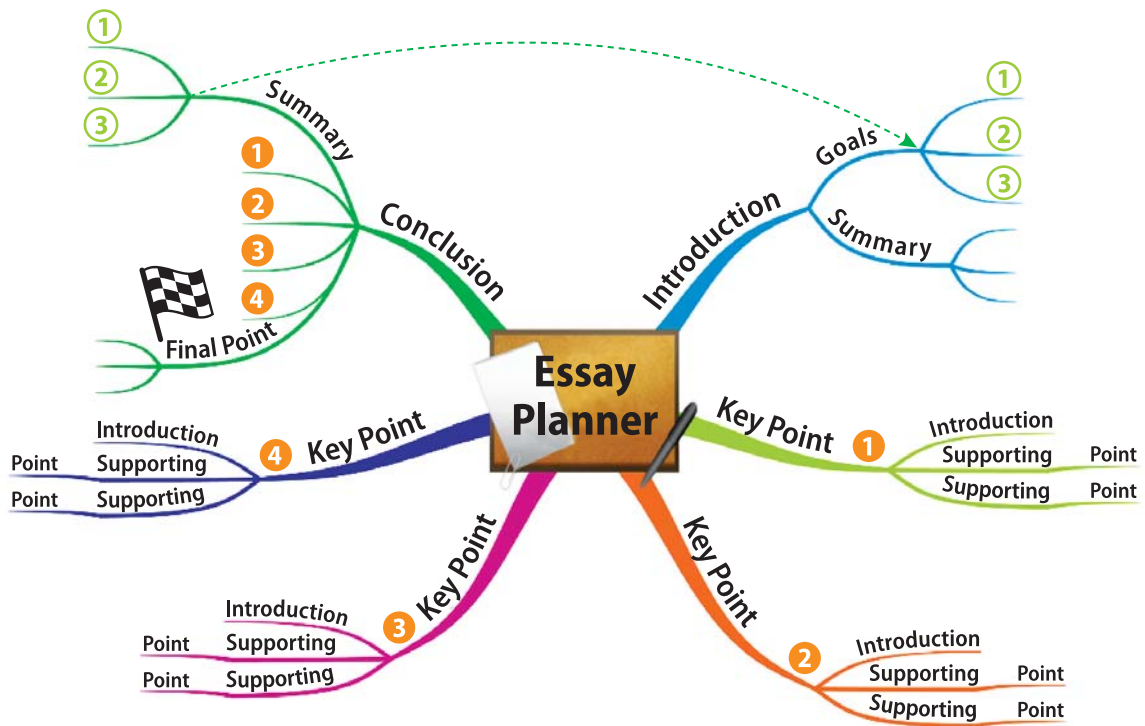
Essay Writing

- An essay is a piece of writing with a particular structure and layout. You may have to write one as coursework or homework or sometimes a short essay forms part of an exam. Sometimes they will have other names such as assignments or reports. There may be specific structures you are expected to follow, this is a traditional essay structure.
- An essay is written in a formal or academic style. This is different from the way you speak or message friends, it is not like a conversation.
- You are expected to stick to the point. Normally you will be given a title sometimes described as "The Question" although it may not be worded as a question. You may be asked to "Discuss" or "Evaluate" or "Explain". Sometimes you will be given a general topic and expected to come up with your own title.

Basic Process

- **How long is it expected to be and when do I have to submit it.**
 - You will often be given a word count for essays. This makes sure they are long enough to cover the question in enough detail and also keeps them down to a sensible length.
 - You may be told “Minimum 2,000 words” if so, you must do that many but probably less than 2,200.
 - It may just say “2,000 words” you do not have to be exact and so plus or minus 10% (1800 to 2,200) would be sensible.
 - Don’t leave it till the last minute to write the essay, you need to submit on time and it should be good work.
 - Make sure you know how to submit it (uploaded to Moodle, emailed to tutor, paper copy handed in).
 - Some assignments have extra instructions which need you to write in a specific font, write the title in a specific way, include a cover sheet, write your name, date in a specific way.
- **Title or Question.**
 - Make sure you understand this, and if you are coming up with your own title that it is fairly specific. For example, the First World War is a huge topic, a particular battle or development of air power is much narrower.
- **Organise your ideas**
 - It is very tempting to just start writing but it is better to put down your ideas on the topic on paper. Don’t try to put much detail just broad areas of how you might approach this. This outline might change so don’t worry if it does. This can be a series of bullet points or a mind map, whatever works best for you. You will end up with a few main ideas and some supporting ideas for each of these.
 - Sort these ideas into an order so you know what you are going to write about, what arguments you are going to use.

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- **Start to write**
 - First thing is a short statement saying what the essay is about, what the point of the essay is and a summary of what ideas you are going to discuss. You will know how to do this because you have put your ideas in order.
- **Then start writing a paragraph for each idea you want to discuss**
 - The beginning of each paragraph will be one of your key points written in sentence form. Then write down each of the supporting ideas or points explaining how they support the idea.
- **Now you can write the introduction**
 - Sounds weird but it is easier to write this paragraph which starts the essay when you have discussed your key points. Because now you know what they are and how you are going to argue it.
 - The introduction gently leads the reader into the topic, why it matters and how you are going to discuss it. At the end of this introduction you can slot in your short statement that you wrote in the first place.
- **Now write the conclusion**
 - The conclusion doesn't have to be long, you have made your arguments. Just review the main points ideally using slightly different words, don't copy and paste. Don't introduce new ideas or more arguments, you've done that.
- **Lastly check it**
 - Run spell checker and grammar checker.
 - Leave it a few hours and then read it all again. Does it still make sense, are you happy with the order, does it all flow, do you need some "transition words" such as "therefore", or "however"? Take a short break, read it all again and you are done.

Exam Preparations

Subjects in colleges will be assessed in a range of ways: perhaps coursework, perhaps projects, perhaps practical tests. Many also include exams. These are not something to be afraid of they are a chance to shine and show what you know.

Before the exams

When and where will they be taking place.

- You will get an “Exam timetable” this will tell you what exams you have, when they will take place and in what room.
- If you have any special arrangements such as using a laptop, extra time, reader, your own room check with staff that these are in place. This may mean that you are in a different room or building from the one on the time table.
- The time and date will always be the same as everybody else.

Plan your revision

- It helps to create a plan of what you need to revise and when you plan to do that.
- Your time is limited so decide on what topics need more work and allocate more time to them. Don't ignore topics that you are comfortable with. Also allocate some time to them as they may be where you get the most marks.
- Be realistic in your planning - think hard about when and where you are going to do all this revision.
- Above all don't spend too much time on the plan. It's no good getting to the exams with a detailed plan having done very little revision.

Getting to the exams

- Make sure you know where you need to go, how long it will take to get there and what time you need to be there. Allow plenty of time, it is no good rushing and arriving anxious out of breath and worried right at the start of the exam. The exam will not be delayed for you, if you are late you will still finish at the same time, there will not be any time extensions.

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What do I take?

- You may get instructions on what you can take in to the exam.
- These are typical arrangements, your college may differ. Check with your Tutor what you will be allowed to take in.
- See through pencil case or a plastic bag for pens pencils, rulers etc. (this stops students writing crib notes on the pencil case).
- Water bottle either without a label or strip off the label (check if you are allowed water).
- Only an approved calculator (some programmable devices are not allowed, you could program in crib notes).
- Either check if there is a clock in the room (normally there is) or wear a watch (smart watches will not be allowed). You will not be allowed to have your phone with you, even switched off.

Some things to ask

- Can I go to the toilet during the exam/assessment?
- Can I get up and walk around if I need to? (usually no if you are in a big room, if you have your own room, probably yes).
- Can I talk to myself if that helps me concentrate? (again usually no if you are in a big room, if you have your own room, probably yes).

During the exam

- Exams have a number of questions to do in the time available. You should have plenty of time to do the work. Try to divide your time equally and fairly between questions. Allow a maximum of 25% difference. If you have allocated 20 minutes per question try not to go over 25 minutes as you will need to make up the time on other questions.
- If there are 5 questions to do, and you are happy to answer 4 and not sure of the 5th, do the 4 you are happy with first. Only then look at the 5th question.

Appendix 2 – Student Action Plan /Check List

During College

College can be fun, exciting, and it can be hard work. In this section we'll cover some of the things to remember, who are the people there to help you, and what help you might need to do well in college. Here are a few questions to consider and answer whilst you're in college;

Circle your answer to this question

Do you have your lesson timetable?..... YES or NO

Circle your answer to this question

Are you keeping it somewhere safe so you don't lose it? YES or NO

Circle your answer to this question

Are you able to manage the workload? YES or NO

Circle your answer to this question

Have you made a schedule to help you organise your assignments? YES or NO

Circle your answer to this question

Do you know where you can go to take breaks? YES or NO

Where?

.....

Circle your answer to this question

How are you going to get food for lunch?

- College canteen
- Packed lunch from home
- Shop in or near to training/work

Circle your answer to this question

In the event of a fire alarm, do you know where to go? YES or NO

Where?

College environments can be overwhelming, finding ways to manage anxiety and sensory overstimulation might help you cope when it is getting too overwhelming. These questions will help you think of ways to manage the sensory environment in training and work;

Do you struggle with noise? YES or NO

If 'yes' here are some way to help manage this

How can college staff support you with this?

.....

Do you struggle with lighting? YES or NO

If 'yes' here are some way to help manage this

How can college staff support you with this?

.....

Do you struggle with smells? YES or NO

If 'yes' here are some way to help manage this

How can college staff support you with this?

.....

Do you struggle with tastes? YES or NO

If 'yes' here are some way to help manage this

How can college staff support you with this?

.....

Do you struggle with texture/touch? YES or NO

If 'yes' here are some way to help manage this

How can college staff support you with this?

.....

Tick which ones you will use

Sensory soothing method	
Noise cancelling headphones	
Sunglasses or coloured lenses	
Scarf to cover nose if smells are too strong	
Stress/sensory toys	
Weighted clothing	

There will be a team of people around you to help you out.

Remember to ask for help when you need it.

Fill in the people who are available to help you in training and/or work;

My course tutor

Name:

Room:

email:

What do they look like?

Learning support assistant

Name:

Room:

email:

What do they look like?

Learner coach/mentor

Name:

Room:

email:

What do they look like?

Support worker

Name:

Room:

email:

What do they look like?

When you're in college there are people to help you, but they first need to know how they can help you. Can you make a list of the things that you might need help with when you are in college?

Answer in the box

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After College

After College

Transition from College

The transition from college can again be an exciting but anxious time. It can be particularly unsettling for some students who often find change difficult. There are transition workers, tutors and mentors that can support you with this. They can help you:

- prepare and plan for what you want to do next.
- get up to date information to help you make the right choice.
- choose a preferred destination which may be university, employment or further training (including apprenticeships).

University

If you want to go to university you will need to know:

- how to apply
- what the university is like and the courses available
- what qualifications you will need to access your chosen course
- how you can arrange a visits to see where the university is and what the campus is like
- who will go with you on the visit
- how to get to the university and where you will stay while you are there
- what student support services do
- what are you going to do while you are not in lectures
- what to do if you do not get the grades for your first choice university
- what to do if things start going wrong once at you are at university.

Employment

If you are not currently employed and want to get a job you will need to know:

- information on employment advice services e.g. careers,
- how to get help with mock interviews, complete application forms, etc.
- about Supported Employment Services
- what jobs you can do with your qualifications? Or will you need to do further qualifications to be able to do the job you want?
- there are a whole range of resources available on www.ASDinfoWales.co.uk/working-with-autism that may help you with this.

Training including traineeships and apprenticeships

You may wish to undertake further training or start an apprenticeship and there are people that can help with:

- information on training advice services e.g. careers, work based learning advisors
- how to get help with mock interviews, complete application forms etc.
- about Supported Employment Services
- what jobs you can do with your qualifications? Or will you need to do further qualifications to be able to do the job you want?
- there are a whole range of resources available on www.ASDinfoWales.co.uk/working-with-autism that may help you with this.

Appendix 3 – Student Action Plan /Check List

After college

When college is coming to an end, you'll need to start thinking about what's going to happen afterwards. Some people go into jobs or apprenticeships and others go to university, and some people take time off to travel, among other things.

To try and decide what to do after training answer the following questions;

What job would you like to do in the future?

Answer in the box

Circle your answer to this question

Do you need to do any more qualifications to be able to do that job YES or NO

If yes, it's worth preparing for further training and/or higher education.

What course do you need to apply for?

Answer in the box

Circle your answer to this question

If you can get the job straight out of college, have you applied for the job? YES or NO

What help do you need from college to get into a job?

Answer in the box

This guide doesn't cover everything about college life, however, it is designed to help you understand and plan for parts of it. If you have any additional comments, thoughts, ideas and plans, please note them down in the following box;

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Other Resources