# Making online learning accessible for those with Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC)

The information below is designed to complement the information given in the ‘[Remote learning: Supporting disabled students](https://academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/files/teaching-remotely-supporting-disabled-studentsdocx)’ and ‘[Making your remote teaching inclusive](https://academic.admin.ox.ac.uk/files/inclusive-remote-teachingdocx)’ documents.

In addition to this guidance, and the specific information about a student's study needs in the Student Support Plan, the Disability Advisory Service is always available to offer guidance in individual cases.

The suggestions below are steps that you can take that may make learning more accessible for those with Autistic Spectrum Condition. However, the student will also have needs and preferences that are unique to them, which may not be included here. Asking the student themselves what they need will be your main guide in deciding what steps to take. If they are happy to do so, ask them discreetly about the impact of their disability and what might be helpful in a remote learning context (never ask or expect a student to discuss personal or medical details).

## General

* Well defined timetable to enable effective planning and organisation in advance (possible support worker matching).
* Provide any learning materials at least 24 hours in advance of the session.
* Grant access to support worker, if applicable.
* Ensure instruction to carry out follow-up work/activities that are given verbally are written down and circulated afterwards.

## Lectures

* Overview of lecture, purpose, outcome, further learning. Break up into shorter segments to aid concentration and revision of content.
* It can take longer for students to formulate a response to questions – online polls can be a good solution.
* Consider the background environment: Ensure there is enough contrast between speaker and background and that distracting features are not part of the background. Using a blurred background can be a useful solution for this. Avoid background images as these often create a visual disturbance and are distracting.
* Ensure there are no bright lights or distracting background noises as these could create sensory overload.

## Tutorials/classes

* Provide prior warning if students are going to be asked to answer direct questions. Set questions and provide an outline plan for the session so students know what to expect in advance.
* Starting the session - ask students whether they are ready to begin. Consider an ice breaker activity whilst waiting for the session to start.
* State that you are aware this is new and if students don’t feel comfortable talking, they could use the chat function to raise questions.
* Offer to double-check with students an optimum set-up in terms of positioning, background and microphone to avoid any disturbance making adjustments in the session. Some students will be studying in less than ideal circumstances so help them check that they have found the best place to work. If you can hear other members of the family, e.g. watching TV, see if the student can move to a quieter spot.
* Ground rules - moderate the session to facilitate turn-taking and participation and set ground rules for interactions. Some students will need time to adjust to this new way of teaching. Others will feel more comfortable with virtual interaction and you may notice a difference in their participation. Agree prompts to curtail discussion or to elaborate on answers. To avoid students dominating the classroom – explain that time in the session is short so extra questions can be sent by email/posted on a discussion forum. Ask students to use the chat window to indicate that they wish to contribute—you could agree shortcuts for these such as a hand symbol.
* Students may prefer to have an audio-only feed for sensory reasons. Make it clear that some access arrangements are necessary to accommodate needs of other participants (so video may be required if a hearing impaired student is participating). Don’t have an expectation that students should look directly into the camera.
* Be aware that a student may still become overwhelmed and need to exit the class or take a break, not necessarily indicating why they are doing so.
* Consider a feedback session asking them specific questions to ensure they are comfortable with the set-up, checking that they understand what is required of them.