Autistic Guide to Flying

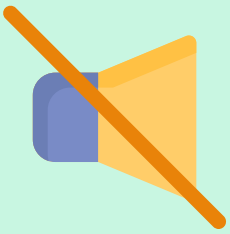
Taking your autistic child on a plane can come with challenges. This guide sets out some useful tips and tricks for getting through the airport without distress.

Sunflower lanyard



The sunflower lanyard signals that you have a hidden disability and might need extra help. You can collect one for free at many airports.

Quiet space



Some airports have a dedicated quiet room which you're allowed to use. In others, you may need to create your own quiet space in a private corner.

Avoid the perfume



Airport shops sell a lot of perfume, and the smell can upset some autistic children. Look for a perfume-free route, and avoid sitting nearby.

DPNA code



DPNA is a Special Service Request code, which can be used for autistic children who need assistance. You can use it when you book, or when contacting the airline.

Visual story



Some airports provide a visual story, showing pictures of the airport and the route through it. If your airport doesn't, you can make your own using photos.

Manage senses



Airports are bright and noisy. Bring a kit to tone down the sensory input for your child - like music, sunglasses and a favourite hoodie.

Visit beforehand



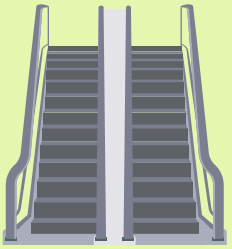
Visit the airport with your child in advance, so that they're familiar with how to get there and what it looks like before your trip.

Stick to routine



Stick to your daily schedule as much as you can - particularly mealtimes and bedtimes - to cut down on digestion and sleep problems.

Move around



Sitting quietly on a plane is difficult - so take the opportunity to move around before the flight, by exploring the airport or looking for snacks.