

Considerations for Autism Inclusive Game Design

This guide was created with autistic people

Autism is experienced in different ways for each autistic person and each autistic person experiences things differently, much like anyone else. While many autistic people can and do experience games the same way everyone can, there are still some common traits which can impact how they navigate the world and to be as inclusive as possible to as many autistic players as possible, we have put together some key points for you to consider.

Considerations for inclusive game design

Keep language clear

Don't use jargon, complex language, or long sentences when you can use short simple ones or bullet points. Avoid simile and metaphor that might be difficult to understand without context.

Avoid using bright colours

Vibrant colours can be overstimulating for autistic people. Instead, use muted tones.

Avoid jump scares

Sensory overload can be many different things. It can be a sudden change of music, visuals or depth – all the things that go into a good jump scare! A game that's less shocking will be inclusive for more players.

More time

Some people can take longer to process information than others. Giving the player more time to interact, process and decide, is more inclusive. Allowing more people to experience your game.

Font is important

Having clear, readable, larger font is essential for inclusive game design.

Make buttons descriptive

Instead of *click here* have something that explains the buttons function like *next page* or *donate*.

Simple and consistent layouts

Create a UI experience which is easy to navigate and easy to follow.

Language and representations of autism

- When portraying autistic characteristics, remember autism is different for each autistic person. Involve a range of autistic people in the development.
- In a recent consultation, the majority of autistic people preferred the term *autistic*: *He/she/they are/is autistic or an autistic person*. Parents generally prefer *on the autism spectrum*.
- The term *Aspergers* (sometimes shortened to *Aspie*) is no longer given as a medical diagnosis so is not used widely, although some people may still use this label.
- People mostly use the word *condition* when talking about autism, some people use *disability*, but *disease* or *disorder* should be avoided.

Some people may use the terms *mild* or *severe*, *high* or *low functioning*, but others find this too simplistic or offensive. It may be best to talk about the person in terms of how being autistic affects them: *He/She/They are autistic and has a learning disability so needs support with everyday things like cooking and dressing*.

- We prefer to say, *speak few or no words rather than non-verbal*, but both can be used.
- Negative language like *suffering from* or *paralysed by* autism can be misleading as in many cases it is a co-occurring condition that causes distress. It may be more appropriate to say *struggling with anxiety* rather than *struggling with autism*.

Autism 101

What is autism?

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how people perceive the world and interact with others.

Autistic people see, hear and feel the world differently to other people. If you are autistic, you are autistic for life; autism is not an illness or disease and cannot be 'cured'. Often people feel being autistic is a fundamental aspect of their identity.

Autism is a spectrum condition. All autistic people share certain difficulties but being autistic will affect them in different ways. Some autistic people also have learning disabilities, mental health issues or other conditions, meaning people need different levels of support. All people on the autism spectrum learn and develop. With the right sort of support, all can be helped to live a more fulfilling life of their own choosing.

National Autistic Society

How we talk about autism

When talking about autism, we use identity-first language: *autistic person*, rather than person-first language: *person with autism*. Research shows that identity-first language is preferred by the majority of autistic people, who see their autism as part of their identity, but not everyone prefers this term. When people are talking about themselves, it is important that they can use the terminology that they feel comfortable with.

We also try to use positive language – avoiding terms like *suffering from*, or terminology that shows autism as a deficit. Similarly, consider whether *symptoms* is the correct term, *characteristics* or *traits* may be more appropriate

Autism is not a mental illness or a learning disability, although many autistic people have mental health problems or a learning disability.