

## Getting Ready for an Autism Evaluation

*A prep checklist for the weeks before the appointment — and the day itself. You don't need to be sure, and you don't need proof. You just need to show up prepared to describe what you've seen.*

### ■ Documents to gather

- ☐ Insurance card and photo ID
- ☐ Referral paperwork from your pediatrician, if you have it
- ☐ Any prior screening results (for example, an M-CHAT from a well visit)
- ☐ Birth to 3 / early intervention paperwork (IFSP), if any
- ☐ School or daycare paperwork — IEP, 504 plan, teacher notes or emails
- ☐ Reports from any speech, OT, or other therapy your child has had
- ☐ A list of current medications and a short medical history
- ☐ A one-page summary you write yourself: top concerns, when you first noticed them, 3–5 specific examples

### ■ Observations to write down

Evaluators rely heavily on what you've seen at home. Specific beats general, and rough dates help. Examples of the kind of phrasing that's useful:

- ☐ When you first noticed each concern  
*"We noticed around his first birthday that he stopped babbling."*
- ☐ Response to their name  
*"I tested it ten times this week from behind her — she turned once."*
- ☐ Words and communication  
*"He had six words at 15 months. He's 20 months now and uses one."*
- ☐ How your child plays  
*"She lines up her animals in the same order and is very upset if one is moved."*
- ☐ Repetitive movements or strong interests  
*"He flaps his hands when he's excited — and he studies wheels more than he plays with the car."*
- ☐ Sensory reactions  
*"Sock seams and the hand dryer can end an outing."*
- ☐ What your child does beautifully  
*Strengths belong in the picture too — what they love, what makes them laugh.*
- ☐ Short phone videos of what you're describing  
*Children famously don't perform their challenges on cue. Ten seconds of video says a lot.*

## ■ Questions to ask the evaluator

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- ☐ Which assessment tools will you use, and what do they involve?  

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- ☐ How long will the evaluation take — one visit or several?  

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- ☐ Do you need forms from us, or from teachers or caregivers, ahead of time?  

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- ☐ When and how will we get the results — and will they be in writing?  

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- ☐ Will the report include specific recommendations we can act on?  

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- ☐ If it isn't autism, will the report say what else might explain what we're seeing?  

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- ☐ Who can we call if we have questions after the report arrives?  

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## ■ The day of — for your child

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- ☐ Book around naps and meals if you can  
*A tired, hungry child is real data — but so is a rested one.*
- ☐ Pack snacks, a drink, and a comfort item
- ☐ Bring a favorite small toy for the waiting room
- ☐ Comfortable, familiar clothes — nothing brand new that day
- ☐ Tell your child simply what to expect  
*"We're going to play some games with a new person today."*
- ☐ Build in extra time so nobody has to rush
- ☐ Plan something gentle afterward — for them and for you

*One more thing: refusing, wandering off, and melting down during an evaluation are all information, not failure. Evaluators expect all of it. Your child does not need to perform — and neither do you.*