

Managing at Breaks and Lunchtimes

Quick reference
SHEET #14



Some learners who are neurodivergent can find unstructured times stressful.

This can be caused by:

- ☹️ Not knowing the rules of the games
- ☹️ Not being sure who to play with
- ☹️ Not being sure when to join in or talk to others
- ☹️ Not knowing what to talk about
- ☹️ Feeling lonely
- ☹️ Finding the noises from other children overwhelming
- ☹️ Not picking up on social cues
- ☹️ Being more vulnerable to being bullied by others

Break times

- ★ Provide an alternative agreed place for the learner to go if it's too noisy so that they feel safe
- ★ Have a location, such as a friendship bench or stick in the playground as a place to go if you want someone to talk to you
- ★ Themed playground games allow interaction between children who may be more reticent to join in; such as hopscotch
- ★ Clubs at lunchtime and break times can be a great place to engage and showcase skills such as Lego or chess club
- ★ Good supervision is useful to spot early challenges that may be arising so the learner knows who to go to, to ask for help
- ★ Rehearse social scenarios with the use of visual images such as photos to practise different responses

Lunchtimes

- 🍔 Queuing may be harder for some learners
 - Show the learner in front and see what they are doing e.g. taking a tray, pouring a drink, ordering the food
- 🍔 Discuss with the learner what they want to eat and drink before standing in the queue
 - Put the canteen menus on the school intranet, if possible, so the learner can see beforehand what's on offer
- 🍔 Get a member of the canteen staff to explain if students are unsure about what to do, or where specific food is served. Students can be encouraged to ask questions e.g. "Excuse me, could you tell me where I get a bottle of water from?"
- 🍔 Check if the learner can use money if they need to pay at lunch (credit may be a better option)
- 🍔 Discuss with the learner if they are not sure where to sit down, and when someone talks to them, how to join in a conversation
- 🍔 Encourage the learner to go to the toilet during each break and lunch time
- 🍔 For some learners, arranging for a quiet place to eat with less noise may be preferable

