Navigating Public Transportation

Tips for Autistic Youth

Public transportation can sometimes feel overwhelming; however, learning how to use public transportation can help build your independence, confidence, and community participation. This tip sheet offers strategies to help you feel more prepared.

Visit your local transportation provider's website to learn about accessibility services, policies, travel training, and rider supports available in your community. Some transit systems also provide a **Support Person Assistance Card**, which allows a support person to travel with you for free. Contact your local transit provider to learn about eligibility and how to apply.



Learn About Accessibility Supports

Many public transportation systems offer accessibility supports that can make travel more comfortable, predictable, and easier to navigate.

Most public transportation providers have information about accessibility services on their website. To find it:

- Visit your local transit provider's website.
- Look for sections called Accessibility, Accessible Transit, Customer Support, Rider Information, or Travel Training.
- Use the website search bar and try searching for different keywords, such as: "Accessibility", "disability services", "travel training", "support person", "accessible transit", or "rider assistance".

Examples of accessibility supports may include:

- Priority seating for people who may benefit from sitting in a quieter or less crowded area.
- Visual and audio stop announcements to help riders know when to get off.
- Handrails and grab bars for stability and support on different modes of transportation.
- Elevators and ramps in stations and ramps to get on and off buses.

Plan for Your Trip

- **Plan your route** by reviewing your stops, transfers, travel time, and a backup route in case plans change.
- **Practice when it's quieter**, or travel with a trusted support person or friend while learning a new route.
- **Know your surroundings**, including the location of elevators, accessible entrances and exits, platforms, and washrooms.

Tip: Many public transportation agencies offer free travel training programs for people with disabilities. These programs can help you learn the transit system, practice routes, and build confidence. Keep in mind that practice trips may not reflect busy travel times, when noise, crowds, and wait times can be different.

What to Bring

Public transportation can feel overwhelming and it can be helpful to bring things that help you stay calm or are comforting such as:

- Noise-cancelling headphones or earplugs.
- Sunglasses or hats for light sensitivity.
- Fidget tools or comfort items.
- Mobile calming apps.
- Weighted items.



Be Ready to Ask for Help

Before you travel, think about how you will get help if you need it.

- **Know who to ask**, such as transit staff, station attendants, information desks, or a trusted person you can call or text.
- **Bring communication supports** that make it easier to ask for help, such as:
    - Scripted phrases rehearsed ahead of time, or saved in your phone *(e.g., "Can you help me find my bus?" or "Is there a quiet place where I can take a short break?")*
    - A charged communication device (if you use one)
    - An emergency contact card with important information

If Something Doesn't Go as Planned

- If you miss your stop, stay calm and get off at the next safe stop.
- Ask transit staff or driver for help.
- Use your phone to contact a support person.
- Look for a map or use a transit app to re-route.
- Stay in a safe, public area if you feel lost.



Learning public transportation takes practice and with preparation and support it can become easier over time!