

FREE RESOURCE FOR EDUCATORS

Inclusive Classroom Checklist

A practical checklist for general and special education teachers supporting neurodivergent learners at all grade levels.

A checklist is only useful if it reflects real practice. This one is designed to be used at the start of the year, revisited each term, and shared with colleagues or support staff. Items marked with a purple "Neurodivergent Focus" tag are especially relevant when a neurodivergent student has been identified in your class. Everything else applies universally.

Physical Environment

- The classroom has a designated quiet or low-stimulation area where students can work or decompress without drawing attention.

ALL CLASSROOMS

NEURODIVERGENT FOCUS

- Seating is flexible. Students have at least one alternative to a fixed upright chair (standing desk, wobble stool, floor cushion, or similar).

NEURODIVERGENT FOCUS

- Fluorescent lighting is reduced or supplemented with natural light or lamp alternatives where possible.

ALL CLASSROOMS

NEURODIVERGENT FOCUS

- The classroom is visually organized. Displays are purposeful and walls are not excessively cluttered.

ALL CLASSROOMS

- Noise-canceling headphones or earplugs are available and normalized for use during independent or focused work.

NEURODIVERGENT FOCUS

- Fidget tools are accessible and their use is treated as a regulation strategy, not a distraction.

NEURODIVERGENT FOCUS

Daily Structure and Transitions

- A visual schedule is posted and updated daily. Students know what is coming and when.

ALL CLASSROOMS

EARLY CHILDHOOD

- Transitions are announced in advance. Students receive at least a five-minute warning before activities change.

ALL CLASSROOMS

NEURODIVERGENT FOCUS

- Movement breaks are built into the schedule at regular intervals, not offered only as a reward or after good behavior.

ALL CLASSROOMS

NEURODIVERGENT FOCUS

- The day begins with a brief grounding or orientation routine that helps students transition into learning mode.

ALL CLASSROOMS

EARLY CHILDHOOD

- Unstructured time (hallways, lunch, recess) is acknowledged as potentially high-stress for some students, with support available if needed.

NEURODIVERGENT FOCUS

Instruction and Delivery

- Instructions are given in multiple formats: verbal, written, and visual where possible.

ALL CLASSROOMS

NEURODIVERGENT FOCUS

- Complex tasks are broken into smaller, clearly sequenced steps with visible checkpoints.

ALL CLASSROOMS

NEURODIVERGENT FOCUS

- Wait time after questions is at least five seconds. Students are not penalized for processing slowly.

ALL CLASSROOMS

NEURODIVERGENT FOCUS

- Corrections are delivered privately and constructively. Public correction in front of peers is avoided.

ALL CLASSROOMS

NEURODIVERGENT FOCUS

- Slides, handouts, and written materials use clean layouts. Excessive color, small fonts, and visual clutter are minimized.

ALL CLASSROOMS

- Lesson content connects to real-world contexts or student interests where possible to support engagement.

ALL CLASSROOMS

NEURODIVERGENT FOCUS

Assessment and Participation

- Assessment formats vary. Students have options beyond timed written tests, such as oral responses, projects, or portfolios.

ALL CLASSROOMS

NEURODIVERGENT FOCUS

- Participation is not equated with speaking aloud. Written responses, drawings, or gesture-based answers are accepted as valid contributions.

ALL CLASSROOMS

NEURODIVERGENT FOCUS

- Students who need extended time receive it without having to leave the room or draw attention to themselves.

NEURODIVERGENT FOCUS

- Testing environments minimize sensory distractions: reduced noise, stable lighting, and minimal foot traffic.

NEURODIVERGENT FOCUS

- Formative feedback is specific, strengths-based, and focused on the work rather than the student's character or effort.

ALL CLASSROOMS

Specific Supports for Neurodivergent Students

- I have read the student's IEP or 504 plan and understand what I am required to implement in my classroom.

NEURODIVERGENT FOCUS

- I have spoken with the student's previous teacher, specialist, or support team to understand what works.

NEURODIVERGENT FOCUS

- I have had a private conversation with the student (where appropriate for age) about how they learn best and what helps them in class.

NEURODIVERGENT FOCUS

SECONDARY

- I have contacted the student's family to introduce myself and establish an open communication channel.

NEURODIVERGENT FOCUS

- I know what the student's sensory triggers are and have made adjustments to the environment where possible.

NEURODIVERGENT FOCUS

- I have a plan for what to do if the student becomes dysregulated, including who to contact and what the student needs in that moment.

NEURODIVERGENT FOCUS

- I do not interpret masking, compliance, or quietness as evidence that the student is fine. I check in regularly.

NEURODIVERGENT FOCUS

- Behavior is addressed through a curiosity lens first: I ask what the behavior is communicating before applying a consequence.

NEURODIVERGENT FOCUS

Communication and Relationships

I greet students individually at the door or at the start of class. Consistent acknowledgment matters more than its form.

ALL CLASSROOMS

I have at least one positive interaction with every student each week, separate from academic feedback.

ALL CLASSROOMS

NEURODIVERGENT FOCUS

Students know how to signal that they need help without having to speak aloud (a card on the desk, a hand signal, or a private messaging option).

NEURODIVERGENT FOCUS

I share updates with parents proactively, not only when there is a problem.

ALL CLASSROOMS

NEURODIVERGENT FOCUS

I am familiar with the concept of masking and I do not assume that a student who appears calm is not struggling.

NEURODIVERGENT FOCUS

I model making mistakes, asking for help, and not knowing the answer. These behaviors normalize what I expect from students.

ALL CLASSROOMS

HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST

Use it at the start of the year as a setup guide, then revisit at the end of each term to identify what has slipped. Share it with your teaching assistant or co-teacher so implementation is consistent across all adults in the room. If a student is struggling and you cannot identify why, work through the neurodivergent-focus items first.