

Understanding difference: guess who?

Teacher guidance

You can use this resource to introduce underpinning concepts that will help learners with autism and other types of SEND to understand **mutual respect and tolerance**.

It also provides opportunities for learners to develop and practise their **English skills** including:

Reading

- Recognise own name and those of others in a group
- Read single words or short phrases

Writing

- Write own name and those of others in a group

Speaking and listening/communicating

- Respond to closed questions
- Ask simple questions
- Use simple descriptive vocabulary – single words and short phrases
- Listen to others
- Contribute to a discussion

Introduction

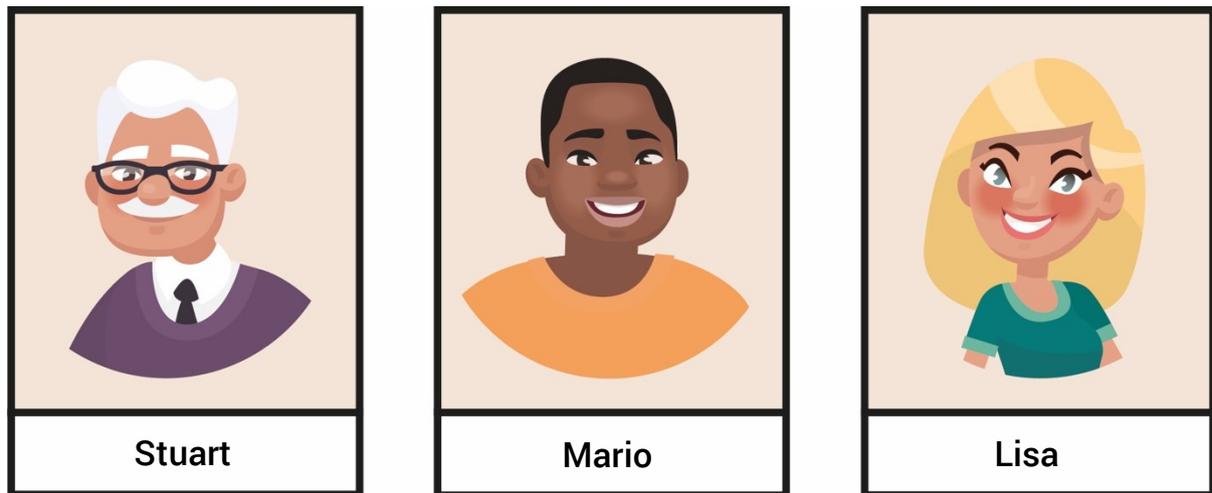
For many learners with autism, their understanding of the world is centred on the self, and they may therefore benefit from explicit teaching to support their understanding of other people and society more generally. This resource takes the form of a game which will help learners recognise differences and similarities between people in a group.

You may need to adapt elements to suit the particular needs of the learners you are working with; the notes for teachers below include some suggestions for how to do this.

You can work through each of the tasks with your learners or go straight into the game itself (Task 3) and draw out the learning covered in the first two tasks by playing the game and supporting learners to think about the characteristics that make us similar and different, coming up with questions to ask as you go along.

Task 1: Creating two set of photocard

The end result of this task will be two sets of identical photocards. Depending on the abilities of your learners, you can either produce these yourself, or engage the learners in part or all of the process.



- Select a group size appropriate for your learners. You could work with a full learning group including teacher and support staff, or a smaller sub-section of the group. Whatever the size of the group, you must include a photocard of each learner playing the game. Try to include photos of individuals with a range of clear, visible differences.
- Make two photocards for each individual which includes their photo and their name.
- Learners could be involved in creating the photocards through:
 - taking the photos and printing them out
 - matching names to photos (their own and/or each other's) and sticking them on
 - writing names onto the photo cards (their own and/or each other's).

Task 2: Aspects of difference

Task 2 helps develop learners' awareness of what makes people different, which will allow them to ask and respond to the questions in Task 3. Depending on the literacy levels of your learners, you may decide to create a set of prompt cards as part of this exercise or to produce one ahead of time, either in the form of pictures/symbols or words. Some examples are provided below.

From the activities suggested, decide which will best help your learners to identify differences, based on their starting point and cognitive abilities.

- Ask learners to look at their own photo card and say what their hair colour is. Ask them if they wear glasses. Are they young or old? Male or female? Teacher or student? Do they use a wheelchair?
- Ask learners what they can say about themselves as they appear in the photocard, e.g. I am wearing pink. I have a hat on.
- Ask learners to look in pairs at both of their photocards. Can they see anything that is the same about the two of them? Can they see anything that is different? E.g. My skin is brown; your skin is white. We are both girls.
- Summarise the visible characteristics that make us the same or different from other people. Learners will be using these in the game that follows.

- Encourage more able learners to come up with more sophisticated or varied questions, e.g. going beyond just hair colour to 'Is their hair short?' 'Is it curly?' 'Do they have a fringe?'. If appropriate, discuss the concept of closed questions: how can they phrase their questions so that the person answering can just say 'yes' or 'no'?
- Display some characteristics or questions as prompts to help in the questioning task. You could create these yourself or get learners to make them as part of the task.



Task 3: Playing the game

Learners now have the opportunity to play a game in which they use their understanding of difference. The object of the game is for one learner (or small group of learners) to identify which photocard the other has selected by asking them questions about the person as they appear in the photocard.

- Arrange learners in pairs or a series of paired small groups, each with an identical set of photocards
- In each pair, one player/group (player 1) selects just one card, which they keep hidden from their 'opponent' (player 2). Player 1 should be able to see this card at all times.
- Player 2 keeps the full set of cards on the table in front of them. (Make sure the number of cards in the set is manageable for the learners you are working with.)
- Player 2 begins to ask questions that will help them eliminate possible photocards, e.g. 'Is your person male?'. If the answer is 'YES', they can take all the photocards of females off the table. If 'NO', they can get rid of all the males.
- Player 2 keeps asking questions until all but one photocard has been eliminated. It should be the photocard selected by Player 1!
- The two learners or groups then swap roles and the questioners become the answerers.

Task 4: Reflective discussion

The nature of the discussion will depend on the abilities of the learners but could include the following questions and observations:

- What are some of the things we have in common?
- What are some of the differences between us?
- Is there anything we all have in common?
- Everyone is different but we can all belong to the same group.
- Being 'different' is normal. No two people are exactly the same.

The discussion can be extended beyond physical appearance to other aspects of commonality and difference.

- Sometimes we like the same things as other people; sometimes we don't.
- It's okay to like different things; e.g. you can still be friends with someone who likes football even if you don't like it.
- You can make choices about how you spend your own time; so can other people. It's okay if you each choose different things.
- We shouldn't try to stop someone doing something they enjoy, just because we don't like it.

You should aim to conclude the discussion by reinforcing that difference is a good thing and it is important to accept people for who they are, however different they are from you. This is a key underpinning concept that can help learners begin to understand the British value of **mutual respect and tolerance**.