

# Back-to-School Checklist for Students with ASD

## (University & College)

### ☐ Campus Navigation & Orientation

- **Why:** University campuses are large, busy, and can feel disorienting.
- **Examples:**
  - Do a campus tour before classes start—practice walking to lecture halls, library, residence, and dining hall.
  - Download the campus map app and mark “safe zones” (quiet study areas, disability services office, student lounge).
  - Time the route between classes to reduce rushing and stress.

### ☐ Build Independence in Daily Living

- **Why:** Managing personal care, meals, and time is key to success.
- **Examples:**
  - Create a weekly meal plan and practice basic cooking or grocery shopping.
  - Set up a laundry routine (use phone reminders).
  - Use budgeting apps (e.g., Mint, YNAB) to track expenses and avoid financial stress.

### ☐ Strengthen Executive Functioning Skills

- **Why:** Large assignments, self-paced study, and less external structure can be challenging.
- **Examples:**
  - Use a digital calendar (Google Calendar, Notion, Trello) for lectures, deadlines, and exams.
  - Break assignments into smaller steps with mini-deadlines.
  - Try the Pomodoro method (25 min work + 5 min break) to manage focus.
  - Use campus learning support services (tutoring, writing center).

### ☐ Self-Advocacy & Disability Services

- **Why:** Professors may not know about your needs unless you disclose them.
- **Examples:**
  - Register with the **Accessibility/Disability Services Office** before classes start.
  - Know your rights: possible accommodations include extended test time, quiet exam spaces, or priority seating.

- Prepare a script/email template:
  - “Hello Professor, I’m registered with Accessibility Services. I’ll need accommodations for note-taking. Could we discuss this?”

## □ Social Integration & Community

- **Why:** University life is about more than academics; building connections reduces isolation.
- **Examples:**
  - Join a campus club related to interests (gaming, art, debate, sports).
  - Attend orientation week events with a peer or mentor.
  - Look for peer mentorship programs—many universities pair new students with upper-years.
  - Practice small talk strategies: “Hi, what program are you in?” or “How did you find that lecture?”

## □ Emotional & Sensory Regulation

- **Why:** Stress, sensory overload, and transitions can trigger anxiety or shutdowns.
- **Examples:**
  - Identify quiet places on campus for breaks (library study room, chapel, wellness lounge).
  - Carry discreet sensory tools (noise-cancelling headphones, chewable jewelry, stress ball).
  - Schedule downtime daily (walks, music, meditation apps like *Headspace*).
  - Know campus mental health resources (counselling center, crisis line).

## □ Plan for Residence or Commuting

- **Why:** Living arrangements strongly affect stress levels.
- **Examples:**
  - Residence: Request a quiet dorm or single room if possible. Bring comfort items (weighted blanket, familiar routines).
  - Commuting: Build extra time into travel for unexpected delays. Use travel time for relaxation (audiobooks, music).

## □ Celebrate Efforts & Milestones

- **Why:** Transitioning to university is a huge step—acknowledge progress, not just outcomes.
- **Examples:**
  - Reward yourself for attending all classes in a week.
  - Share successes with supportive friends or family.
  - Keep a “small wins” journal to track achievements.

**Tip for Students:** Independence doesn't mean doing everything alone—it means knowing when to seek support and using available resources effectively.