



Autism
Society
Inland Empire



Spooktacular

**HALLOWEEN TIPS FOR
CHILDREN WITH AUTISM**



Our mission at the Autism Society Inland Empire is to create connections, empowering everyone in the Autism community with the resources needed to live fully.

Halloween is an exciting holiday for kids of all ages. But for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), the sights and sounds accompanying Halloween can be difficult to handle.

With a little extra practice and preparation, Halloween can be more enjoyable.

Our thanks and gratitude to our Panel of Advisors and Alexis Olexiewicz, M.S. CCC-SLP

Happy Halloween to all!



A vertical strip on the left side of the page features various Halloween-themed decorations on an orange background. These include two black bat silhouettes at the top, two striped lollipops (one black and white, one yellow and white) angled downwards, several small round candies in orange, purple, and red, a large black spiderweb in the lower half, and two black spider silhouettes at the bottom.

WHY HALLOWEEN MIGHT BE SCARY OR CHALLENGING FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

Halloween can be scary for kids with Autism for many reasons. It's often unique to each child. Some common challenges include:

Costumes and decorations: Costumes and decorations can feel overwhelming and unexpected for children with autism. For example, store-bought costumes may have itchy material, making it difficult for children with sensory sensitivities.

Change of Routine: Halloween happens at a time when children are normally getting ready for bed. Children with autism often prefer routines (including ones they have created themselves). Instead of going to bed like they are supposed to, they are now being taken out during nighttime.

Crowds: Loud noise or lots of activity can also be overloading for those with sensory sensitivities.

Interacting with strangers: Children may feel less comfortable interacting with people who they are less familiar with. We may even teach the rule "don't talk to strangers." Now there are new social rules to learn just for one night.

TIPS TO MAKE HALLOWEEN AUTISM FRIENDLY

1. Pick A Sensory Friendly Costume.

Try on costumes before Halloween. If the costume is uncomfortable, you may need to practice wearing it to get your child used to it or find an alternative, such as a Halloween costume that fits over your child's regular clothes, such as butterfly wings or capes.

2. Use Visual Supports To Help Prepare.

Visual supports are proven ways to help people with Autism process information, use language, and understand and interact with their physical and social environments. They can be drawings, pictures, or words. Examples of visual supports are visual schedules and social narratives which we have included in this toolkit.

3. Use Supports To Help Communication If Needed.

If your child cannot say "trick or treat," you can use a card to hand. We have examples in this toolkit.

4. Practice Trick-Or-Treating Ahead Of Time.

Practice things like saying thank you even if you get the candy you hate the most.

5. Be Prepared.

Bring headphones, earplugs, and/or comfort items (e.g., stuffed animal/fidget) to help manage sensory overload during celebrations and trick-or-treating. Work with your child to devise a clear plan for communicating when they need a break or if they are finished for the evening. Rehearse this plan. It might also be important to stay close to home so that children can take breaks as needed.

6. Know Your Child's Limits.

Trick or treating can be a stressful experience for children with Autism. If your child is not comfortable trick-or-treating, you can start by deciding (and even negotiating) a certain number of houses. Assess how your child is doing and build up to more houses the following year. Sometimes a community trunk-or-treat event with a clear beginning and end may be less stressful for the child.

HELPFUL HALLOWEEN SOCIAL STORIES

[Carving a Pumpkin Social Story](#) - From And Next Comes L. This is a free 10-page detailed account of how to carve jack-o-lanterns for Halloween. You must enter your name and email to receive the download.

[Halloween Social Story from Mosswood Connections](#) - This free one-page fill-in-the-blank style social story looks great and a template for making a Halloween schedule for your kids!

[Trick-or-Treating Social Story](#) - Free Trick-or-Treating Social Story PDF with simple, fill-in-the-blank and step-by-step routines for October 31st.

[Trick-or-Treating Social Story](#) - From Communication Station. This free social story is a downloadable PowerPoint you can personalize. You have to sign up for Scribd to download.

[Trick or Treat Halloween social story and AAC communication board.](#) - Costs \$1 on Teachers Pay Teachers.

[What to Expect on Halloween: Handing Out Candy Social Story from Positively Autism](#) - This free 11-page social story from Positively Autism focuses on handing out candy on Halloween.



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WHAT DIFFERENT COLOR PUMPKINS MEAN

People will **sometimes** use different colored pumpkins or buckets that mean different things. The trends behind special cause pumpkins all began as grassroots movements by individual parents looking to protect or honor their children before growing into national campaigns.

What the Colors Mean

💙 Teal Pumpkins (Allergy Safety): The house offers non-food treats. Houses with teal pumpkins provide safe prizes like stickers, glow sticks, or bubbles for children with severe food allergies. If your child has allergies, they can also carry a teal bag to alert neighbors.

💙 Blue Buckets & Pumpkins (Autism Awareness): The child may be neurodivergent. Families use blue candy buckets to gently remind neighbors that a trick-or-treater might be non-verbal, may not say "Trick or Treat," or has sensory sensitivities.

💜 Purple Pumpkins (Epilepsy Support): The home supports seizure disorder awareness. The Purple Pumpkin Project uses this color on porches to raise visibility and support for families living with epilepsy.

💖 Pink Pumpkins (Breast Cancer Awareness): The home honors cancer survivors. Neighbors display pink pumpkins on their porches to show solidarity and support research during Breast Cancer Awareness Month.



COMMUNICATING TRICK OR TREAT

As a speech therapist, I am always aware of the importance of communication. Effectively communicating with others helps us build relationships, share information, grow our world knowledge, and so much more! As we enter the holiday season, the importance of communicating with others grows. Inviting friends and family to gatherings, responding to invitations, commenting on events, sharing compliments, and, of course, saying “Trick or Treat!” are ways communication helps us get the most out of our holiday experiences. The most valuable thing about communication is the exchange of information. Communication is not one-sided- it strengthens our relationships with others!

As Halloween approaches, this is a great opportunity to share the importance of providing opportunities for everyone to participate. Inclusivity, as we all know, is important! How can we include our friends and family who are nonverbal, minimally verbal, or just have difficulty communicating in general? The Autism Society Inland Empire’s solution is provided in their “Halloween Toolkit.” Included are “Trick or Treat!” cards that can be handed out while trick-or-treating. They are provided so those who have difficulty communicating on any level can still participate in the communication exchange that makes trick-or-treating fun! It is The Autism Society Inland Empire’s way of providing an option to make Halloween more inclusive. I hope you enjoy it as I do, and have a very Happy Halloween!

Alexis Olexiewicz, M.S. CCC-SLP SP30057

TRICK OR TREAT CARDS



Thank you for making
Halloween inclusive!
"Have a **SPÖÖK-tacular**
Halloween!"



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From all of us at the
Autism Society Inland Empire



If you have other questions,
reach out to us at:

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