

In "[Preparing the School for Your Child With Special Needs](#)," Terri Mauro offer lists of information on particular disabilities that can be customized to a specific child's needs and shared with teachers. Each list includes five things teachers need to know, and links to handouts written for teachers.

A regular reader of the site (who has asked to remain anonymous) shared how she had used those lists. She wrote, "I made good use of your 'five things your child's teacher should know' letters, and merged them with specific examples for my son's teachers this year. He's now in Grade 6, and so much is expected of an average 11-yr-old which just isn't relevant for mine. I got a call from one of his two teachers, thanking me for the letter. She said it was exactly what she needs, and she set up a meeting for me with the other teacher and the special needs teacher so we could talk more in-depth."

Below is that successful letter (name changed to initials), shared to help you craft your own letters.

Example Letter from a Parent to a New Teacher:

Hi! Hopefully soon, we'll be able to meet so we can get to know one another better. There is much to discuss, including a first IEP. In the meantime, here are some thoughts to help you get to know my son.

C. is a good person -- he'd never intentionally hurt anyone or anything. In some ways, he is bright and quick. However, he has limitations. He has been diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome combined with anxiety, ADHD inattentive subtype, and Dyslexia (along with other learning disabilities).

None of these are severe problems, individually. But the combination makes some things very difficult for C. Some of these are:

a) C. is sensitive to changes and transitions. He does best when things are structured, and much the same from day to day. He does poorly when things change without notice.

b) C. can have a hard time understanding instructions and directions. Sometimes this is because he has gotten distracted or anxious, and anything said is just background noise to him. Sometimes this is because

certain kinds of directions, especially directions involving multiple actions and multiple objects, get mixed up in his head.

c) C. would like to be friendly and have friends, but has little understanding of or feeling for social cues and interaction. He interprets teasing, even friendly or in fun, as hostile. He interprets a severe or raised tone of voice as "yelling at him."

d) C. has difficulty organizing himself and planning ahead. This becomes far more difficult for him if it involves multiple activities or a time frame of more a day or two.

His problems combine in various ways. For example, if he is distracted and misses an announcement about some schedule change, then when that change occurs it takes him completely by surprise, with negative consequences. It is also the case that, if he misses an announcement, even if he hears later discussion about the upcoming change, he will not necessarily infer that a change is coming or that it will affect him.

When he does get anxious, confused, overwhelmed, or taken by surprise, sometimes he will balk at tasks and become unwilling to attempt to perform them at that time. We have found that giving him space and time to collect himself helps.

C. has more success with schoolwork when he has access to his Palm Pilot for organization purposes and to an Alphasmart to take notes. C. is able to focus on single tasks for an extended length of time. However, multi-step tasks are much more difficult for him because he can't break them into smaller, discrete elements. Helping him do this helps to get him to complete such tasks.

It is important to realize that when C. leaves the school at the end of the day, he leaves it all behind. He will rarely think about school, or assignments, or mention any events, or discuss any positive or negative experiences with us, even when we inquire. He will usually leave his folder, his backpack, his books, and anything else school-related at the school. This has led to late reports, field trips we didn't know about until after the trip (much less seeing a permission slip ahead of time), and so on. If there is anything we should know, do not depend upon C. to get the information to

us. Unfortunately, unless you see it go into his folder, and see his folder go into his backpack, and see him carry his backpack out the door, we probably won't see it, and we're not going to hear about it, either.

Finally, C. has had great difficulty sleeping for the past few days, due to anxiety about school. We are striving to get him to school on time, and will be penalizing him for lateness. Please address any concerns to us directly; keeping the school side of things positive will help minimize his anxieties.

Thank you for your time,

T

(parent)

Sample Letter to the Teacher

How one reader used my "Preparing the School" suggestions

By [Terri Mauro](#), About.com Guide

<http://specialchildren.about.com/od/schoolhowtosforparents/a/sampleletter.htm>