

Social Communication Criteria		
Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts, as manifested by all three of the following, currently or by history:		
Deficits in social-emotional reciprocity		
Behavior	Child examples	Adult examples
Abnormal social approach	Standing next to a peer, without looking directly at them in order to start a conversation.	Beginning a conversation without making sure they have the attention of the person they wish to speak with; talking without an introduction or making eye contact.
Failure of normal back-and-forth conversation	Failing to imitate or repeat words spoken by an adult.	Answering a question if directly spoken to, but then not continuing the conversation by asking the person a question, or providing a follow up statement.
Reduced sharing of interests, emotion, affect	Not introducing new ideas into play.	Not asking a person about how they feel, or what they like.
Failure to initiate or respond to social interaction	Not independently going up to an adult and show them a toy or try to get their attention.	Difficulty striking up a conversation independently with a stranger, or shying away from talking with people.
Deficits in nonverbal communicative behaviors used for social interaction		
Behavior	Child Examples	Adult Examples
Poorly integrated verbal and nonverbal communication	Having difficulty coordinating gestures with verbal language, so they might not use phrases like “look over there” while pointing.	Shaking their head up and down to indicate “yes” to someone, while looking down at the floor instead of at the person’s face.
Abnormalities in eye contact and body language	Speaking while looking at objects and not while looking at a person’s face.	Difficulty standing still in a social situation while talking to others.
Deficits in understanding and use of gestures	Failing to follow an adult’s gaze when hearing “look at that”.	Not knowing how to react when another person’s facial expression indicates concern, disgust or fear.
Lack of facial expressions and nonverbal communication	Failing to use gestures, such as pointing or waving, when interacting with others.	Difficulty coordinating the emotion of what to say with the appropriate facial expression.
Deficits in developing, maintaining and understanding relationships		
Behavior	Child Examples	Adult Examples
Difficulties adjusting behavior to suit various social contexts	Difficulty adjusting their speech to fit the listener; so they may use the same language when speaking to a 5-year-old as when speaking to a toddler.	Difficulty using more formal language with a boss, and less formal language with a peer.
Difficulties in sharing imaginative play or in making friends	Challenges in creating pretend scenarios in play that are new and flexible.	Finding it challenging to make and keep friends that share similar recreational interests without help from others.

Absence of interest in peers	Difficulty in making friends with typically-developing peers of the same age.	May not be particularly interested in seeking out others with whom to share social interests.
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Adapted from DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013)