

Levels of Knowledge about Autism Spectrum Disorders
Blackwell & Sheppard, 2017

Table 1. True/False survey items for the *levels of knowledge about autism* section (T = True, F = False). *Denotes items taken from Tipton & Blacher (2014).

Basic Characteristics ($\alpha = .750$)

1. Autism is an emotional disorder.* (F)
2. Autism is a developmental disorder.* (T)
3. Autism generally begins before the age of 3. (T)
4. Some children with autism seem to develop normally until around 18 to 24 months of age and then lose the skills they once had. (T)
5. The characteristics of autism can range from very mild to very severe. (T)
6. All individuals with autism have significant disability and are unable to live independently. (F)
7. All individuals with autism are nonverbal, that is, they do not speak. (F)
8. All individuals with autism display poor eye contact.* (F)
9. Individuals with autism are incapable of having interpersonal relationships. (F)
10. All individuals with autism have below average intelligence. (F)
11. Individuals with autism are often more capable than standardized tests demonstrate.* (T)
12. Some individuals with autism have exceptional abilities in areas such as visual skills, music, and math. (T)

Early Signs ($\alpha = .825$)

1. Reduced sharing of interests, emotions, or affect with other people or failure to initiate or respond to social interactions is a sign that a child might have autism. (T)
2. Absence of pointing, waving goodbye, or using other gestures to communicate is a sign that a child might have autism. (T)
3. Absence of interest in peers/parents is a sign that a child might have autism. (T)
4. Having difficulties adjusting behavior to suit various social contexts is a sign that a child might have autism. (T)
5. Absence of imaginative play or difficulty imitating others is a sign that a child might have autism. (T)
6. Repeating the same actions or movements over and over again, such as flapping hands, rocking his/her body, or spinning in circles, is a sign that a child might have autism. (T)
7. Responding to a question by repeating it, rather than answering it, is a sign that a child might have autism. (T)
8. Having difficulty adapting to changes in schedule or environment (e.g., having a tantrum if the furniture is rearranged) is a sign of autism. (T)
9. Having obsessive, unusual interest in one object or one specific part of an object is a sign that a child might have autism. (T)
10. Underreacting or overreacting to sensory stimuli (e.g., apparent indifference to pain/temperature, adverse response to specific sounds or textures) is a sign that a child might have autism. (T)

Prevalence ($\alpha = .646$)

1. The number of individuals diagnosed with autism is increasing. (T)
2. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the prevalence of children estimated to be affected by autism is 100 to 1. (F)
3. Autism is diagnosed more frequently in males than in females.* (T)
4. Autism occurs equally in all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups. (T)

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Causes ($\alpha = .738$)

1. The cause of autism is unknown. (T)
2. There is a single gene for autism. (F)
3. A child is more likely to have autism if he/she has a sibling with autism. (T)
4. Autism is caused by parents who are indifferent to the emotional needs of their children. (F)
5. Vaccines can cause autism.* (F)
6. The brain of a person with autism looks dramatically different from the brain of a neurotypical person. (F)

Diagnosis ($\alpha = .778$)

1. Autism can be diagnosed at 18 months in some individuals.* (T)
2. Autism can be diagnosed by brain scan. (F)
3. Autism can be diagnosed by urine test. (F)
4. Autism can be diagnosed by blood test. (F)
5. Autism can be diagnosed by behavior and development assessments, including interviewing parents and observing the behaviors of the child. (T)

Prognosis and Intervention ($\alpha = .779$)

1. There is a cure for autism.* (F)
 2. Some children with autism can grow up to live independently.* (T)
 3. Appropriate special education services can improve the development and learning of children with autism.* (T)
 4. There is one intervention that works for all individuals with autism.* (F)
 5. Secretin therapy is a safe and effective treatment for autism that has been supported by good scientific evidence. (F)
 6. Stem cell therapy is a safe and effective treatment for autism that has been supported by good scientific evidence. (F)
 7. Chelation therapy is a safe and effective treatment for autism that has been supported by good scientific evidence. (F)
 8. Applied behavior analysis is a safe and effective treatment for autism that has been supported by good scientific evidence. (T)
 9. Special diet is a safe and effective treatment for autism that has been supported by good scientific evidence.* (F)
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Table 2. Participants' sources of knowledge about autism spectrum disorder. (*n* = 87)

Source of knowledge*	<i>n</i>	%
Mass media (e.g., TV shows, movies, magazines, and newspapers)	57	65.5
Autism awareness activities (e.g., autism awareness month, autism walks, telethons, and school/class presentations)	33	37.9
Personal communication (e.g., talking with a friend/family member who knows about autism)	58	66.7
Personal experiences (e.g., personally knowing someone with autism)	44	50.6
Coursework/workshops	20	23.0
Other Sources	1	1.1
No knowledge sources (e.g., do not know anything about autism)	3	3.4

*Participants were allowed to select multiple sources. Thus, totals may exceed 87 participants and percentages may exceed 100%.

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Table 3. Participants' level of knowledge about autism spectrum disorder by survey sub-category. (*n* = 87).

Sub-category	Chronbach's α	# of questions	Possible Range	Actual Range	Mean score	SD	Percentage of correct responses
Basic characteristics	.750	12	0-12	0-12	8.48	2.51	70.1%
Early Signs	.825	10	0-10	0-10	5.81	2.98	58.1%
Prevalence	.646	4	0-4	0-4	1.68	1.16	42.0%
Causes	.738	6	0-6	0-6	2.24	1.41	37.3%
Diagnosis	.778	5	0-5	0-6	2.47	1.55	49.4%
Intervention	.779	9	0-9	0-9	3.74	2.05	41.6%
Total Score		46	0-46	0-39	24.44	8.96	53.0%

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Table 4. Differences in participants' levels of knowledge about autism spectrum disorder based on the sources of knowledge. ($n = 87$)

Source of knowledge	Source utilized?				<i>d</i>	<i>t</i> (85)
	Yes		No			
	M	SD	M	SD		
<u>Mass media</u>						
Basic characteristics	8.65	1.98	8.17	3.32	.176	0.48
Early signs	6.07	2.94	5.33	3.04	.247	1.01
Prevalence	1.54	1.00	1.93	1.41	.319	1.50
Causes	2.19	1.37	2.33	1.52	.097	0.44
Diagnosis	2.40	1.53	2.60	1.59	.128	0.57
Intervention	3.75	1.81	3.70	2.49	.023	0.11
<i>Total score</i>	<i>24.61</i>	<i>7.85</i>	<i>24.01</i>	<i>10.90</i>	<i>.063</i>	<i>0.30</i>
<u>Autism awareness activities</u>						
Basic characteristics	9.39	1.69	7.93	2.77	.636	2.73**
Early signs	6.58	2.60	5.35	3.12	.428	1.90
Prevalence	2.03	1.05	1.46	1.19	.508	2.26*
Causes	2.55	1.12	2.05	1.55	.370	1.61
Diagnosis	3.00	1.39	2.15	1.56	.575	2.57**
Intervention	4.30	1.67	3.39	2.20	.466	2.04*
<i>Total score</i>	<i>27.85</i>	<i>6.40</i>	<i>22.33</i>	<i>9.68</i>	<i>.673</i>	<i>2.91**</i>
<u>Personal communication</u>						
Basic characteristics	9.09	1.98	7.28	3.03	.707	3.35**
Early signs	6.31	2.72	4.83	3.27	.492	2.23*
Prevalence	1.74	1.19	1.55	1.12	.164	0.72
Causes	2.31	1.42	2.10	1.42	.148	0.65
Diagnosis	2.55	1.50	2.31	1.65	.152	0.68
Intervention	3.81	1.85	3.59	2.44	.101	0.47
<i>Total score</i>	<i>25.81</i>	<i>7.67</i>	<i>21.66</i>	<i>10.72</i>	<i>.445</i>	<i>2.08*</i>
<u>Personal experience</u>						
Basic characteristics	9.57	1.35	7.37	2.93	.964	4.52***
Early signs	6.41	2.55	5.21	3.28	.408	1.91
Prevalence	1.89	1.17	1.47	1.14	.364	1.70
Causes	2.52	1.30	1.95	1.48	.409	1.91
Diagnosis	2.95	1.36	1.95	1.48	.704	3.28**
Intervention	4.09	1.68	3.37	2.34	.353	1.65
<i>Total score</i>	<i>27.43</i>	<i>6.42</i>	<i>21.35</i>	<i>10.15</i>	<i>.716</i>	<i>3.35**</i>
<u>Coursework/workshops</u>						
Basic characteristics	9.20	1.61	8.26	2.70	.423	1.48
Early signs	6.65	2.23	5.57	3.14	.397	1.43
Prevalence	1.55	0.89	1.72	1.24	.158	0.57
Causes	2.25	1.02	2.24	1.52	.008	0.03
Diagnosis	2.70	1.42	2.40	1.59	.199	0.79
Intervention	3.75	1.83	3.73	2.13	.010	0.04
<i>Total score</i>	<i>26.10</i>	<i>5.72</i>	<i>23.93</i>	<i>9.70</i>	<i>.273</i>	<i>0.95</i>

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$