Autism
AIM

How Your Disability Affects You

PIP Guide Series: 2

Disclaimer

For the purposes of completing the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) form, autism is recognised as a disability. While we understand that people might not like to call autism a disability, it is important to note that the PIP assessment sees it this way.

We know that language can be sensitive, and we aim to use clear and respectful terminology throughout this guide. This guide aims to provide practical help in completing the PIP form, ensuring that individuals accurately describe how autism affects daily life so you can get the support you need.

Accuracy and Openness

> “We naturally try to prove our capability and independence. We have been taught to minimise our difficulties all our lives which can make it harder for us to identify where we have impairments.”

It can also be easy for autistic people, or those close to them, to see their challenges and adaptions as typical and not worth mentioning. Talking to someone else can help you identify where you already have support which enables you to manage tasks.

It is important to be as accurate as you can when informing the DWP of your difficulties. Don’t overstate *or downplay* your experience.

Useful Organisations

You might find it helpful to look for support with filling in your PIP2 form. The provision available with vary depending on your location so research what is in your area.

- Citizens Advice.
- Social prescribing services.
- Local charities may offer a service helping you complete the forms.
- Private companies offer paid for services and support.
- Online sites provide a variety of free and paid for guidance and advice.

Contents

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General Advice

The DWP will send you a form called “How Your Disability Affects You”. This will be either sent in the post or by email. The form is long and can be overwhelming, but it can be broken down into smaller sections.

Get support from other people. Remember to let the DWP know if you have been helped to complete the form. For example, you may need help to understand what needs to be done in each section, or to explain how you are affected.

Plan time to complete the form and spread it out over a couple of weeks if you want.

Repeat yourself - where the same difficulty causes problems in more than one category, say it every time. Using the same words is okay too.

Ask for more time if you need it - there is a deadline to complete and return the form. The date will be written on the letter that comes with the form. You can contact the DWP and ask for extra time if you need longer.

Use extra pages - the form looks like there is a limited space which you can use, but you can carry on your answers onto more sheets. If you do this, it is good to clearly label what the extra pages are answering.

Fill out your claim as if the decision maker has never heard of autism before. Do not assume they know or understand without explanation.

You don’t need to have points in every category to be awarded enhanced rate or standard rate PIP. You can build up points across a few questions to be awarded the daily living component. You can be awarded the mobility component with either question or both.

Scoring points when you can do an activity

It is common for claimants to be awarded points in activities they can do when certain conditions are met. This is because PIP considers factors such as if support is needed and how often you can carry out the task.

It is important to explain the difficulties you have with specific activities and the ways you adapt them.

Remember, the PIP decision makers are trying to assess how you are really affected day-to-day, not how you are on an idealised day when you manage everything at your best.

A common pitfall that can lead fewer points is when you don’t provide enough detail about the challenges you have with specific tasks or activities.

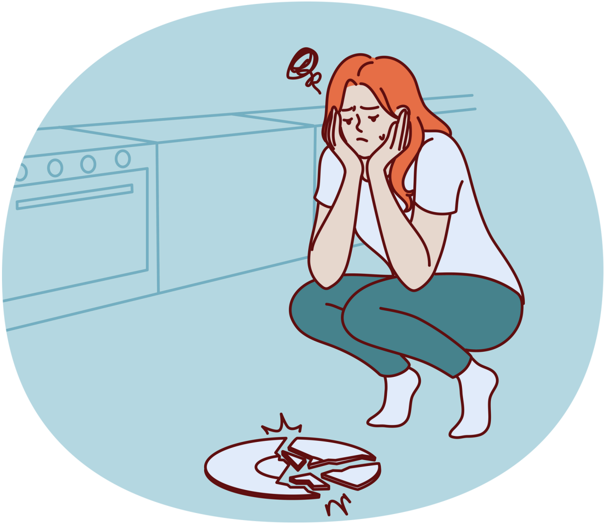
This can be because you make adjustments to how you manage activities but don’t mention them. They might be adjustments that are so familiar and routine to you that it’s hard for you to notice them. Try to carefully think about what steps you take.

Reliability

Reliably is a really important word when applying for PIP. You can be awarded points if you cannot complete tasks reliably. Reliably is defined as:

- **Safely** – unlikely to cause harm to you or another person.
- **To an acceptable standard** – considered generally “good enough” and without a negative impact that most people would consider unreasonable, such as pain or breathlessness.
- **Repeatedly** – as often as the activity could reasonably be required.
- **In a reasonable timeframe** – no more than twice as long as someone without a condition would take to do the same task.

These definitions are subjective. If you think you cannot complete an activity reliably, safely or in a reasonable time, then please explain why.



When answering the questions about daily living and mobility, tell PIP about difficulties you have completing activities reliably – i.e. safely, to an acceptable standard, repeatedly and in a timely manner.

For example, it may be considered that you cannot reliably make a cup of tea if:

- You are likely to burn or scald yourself when using the kettle.
- You are likely to spill milk or tea as you make it.
- You are unaware of whether milk has spoiled and are likely to use sour milk.
- You forget key steps such as boiling the kettle.
- You get distracted and need to repeat steps of the activity.
- You are unable to make another cup of tea when you next need to make one.
- You take a long time to make a cup of tea compared to other people.

Making a cup of tea is **not** specifically an activity where PIP points are awarded. **It is here to show how you can think about reliability for individual tasks.**

Claimants report that assessors and decision makers don’t always apply this concept correctly during your initial application or at mandatory reconsideration. Tribunal panels are more likely to understand and follow this guidance appropriately.

Frequency and Variation

This question about variability is important for PIP. How points should be awarded for variable conditions has been considered and decided by the Upper Tribunal.

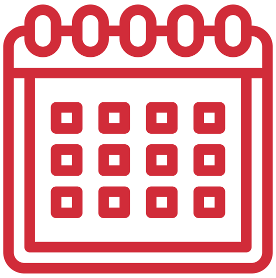
For points to be awarded, they look for the criteria to be met for at least 50% of days. If your difficulties changes a lot, explain as fully as possible what difficulties you have and try your best to estimate how many days, on average, you face these challenges.

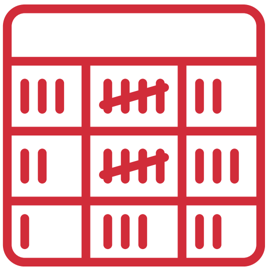
It may be easier and more accurate to explain your difficulties by talking about how many days per week you experience them. Then, the decision maker will figure out how to apply it over a 12-month period.

If your condition changes throughout the day, you do not need to meet the criteria for the majority of the day. If you meet PIP criteria for part of a day, it counts for the whole day unless it is just “momentary”.

Momentary is a vague term which is used in the guidance for awarding PIP. If you have difficulties, explain what they are and the impact they have on you.

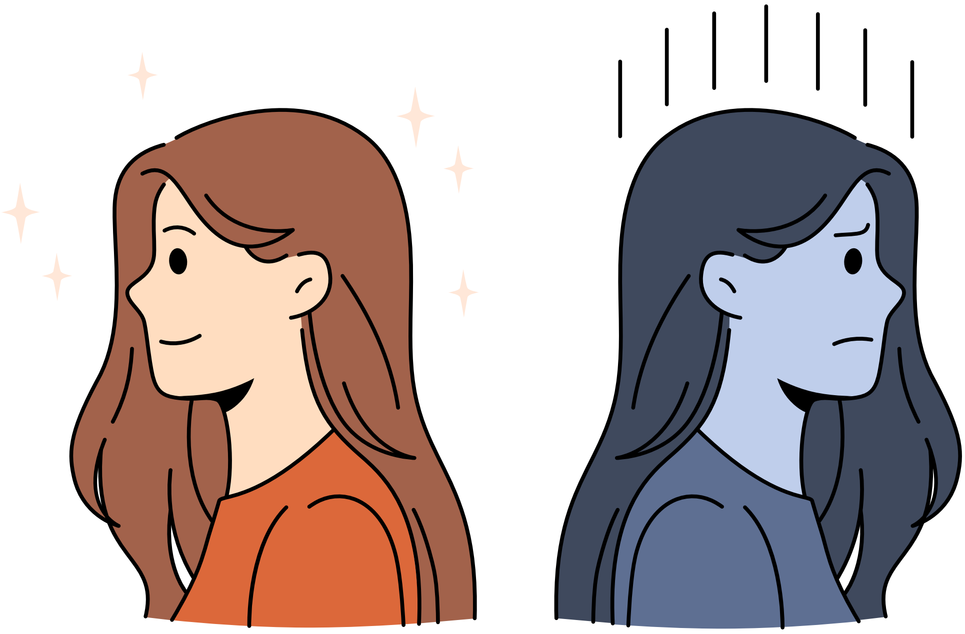
For example, if you can understand and communicate with others unaided in the morning but need support later, you can be awarded points due to that difficulty if it occurs on most days.





Claimants report that assessors and decision makers don’t always apply this concept correctly during your initial application or at mandatory reconsideration. Tribunal panels are more likely to understand and follow this guidance appropriately.

Good and Bad Days



The PIP form guides you to talk about good days and bad days. Be aware that the assessor and decision maker are likely to interpret what this means differently to you. They could interpret “good day” to mean that you have no difficulties at all whereas you might think of a “good day” as one where you manage to complete an activity despite those difficulties.

It is better to avoid these terms and instead clearly explain the impact of your disability, including any workarounds and support you need.

How to fill out your application

Here is an example of a structure you could follow when filling out your PIP application:

State the condition(s) which causes you difficulty.

Points are given based on “how your disability affects you”, so it is important to link the tasks back to autism (and any other conditions you have).

Explain the problems you have completing the task.

Don’t assume that the assessor or decision maker knows and understands anything about autism. You should explain what difficulties you have, and the impact of those difficulties. It can be helpful to give examples. Remember to think about how you adapt tasks. It is not enough to say “I don’t do this task”.

Explain what aids and appliances you use to help you and what adaptions you have made.

You need to be using these because of your disability, not just for convenience; explain how they help the difficulties autism causes. If there is a common aid which you do not use, you can also explain why. For example, if you don’t use an alarm as a reminder because you forget why it was set, or the noise causes you distress, you can also explain this here.

Explain what help you have from another person or how this help would benefit you.

Help can be prompting, supervision or assistance. Consider whether you can do a task safely, in a reasonable time, and to an acceptable standard without this help.

Explain if you have more difficulty at particular times of day.

You can be awarded points if there is a time of day when you need to do a task, but you cannot do it reliably. If a description applies for part of the day, then it can be considered to apply for the whole day. For example, you may not be able to change into pyjamas at the end of the day due to executive functioning difficulties or fatigue and so sleep in your clothes.

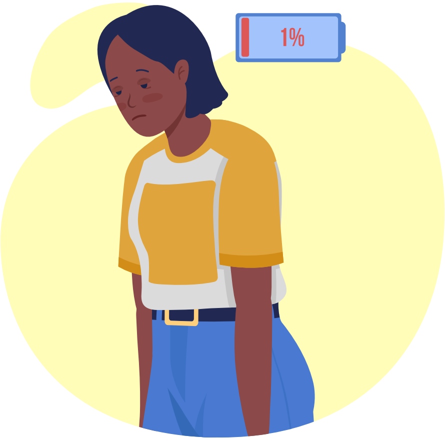
If your abilities vary, explain how it varies and how often you would have difficulties.

Give your best estimate of how often you have the difficulties you are telling PIP about. PIP guidance states that “A scoring descriptor can apply to claimants in an activity where their impairment(s) affects their ability to complete an activity, at some stage of the day, on more than 50 per cent of days in the 12 month period”.

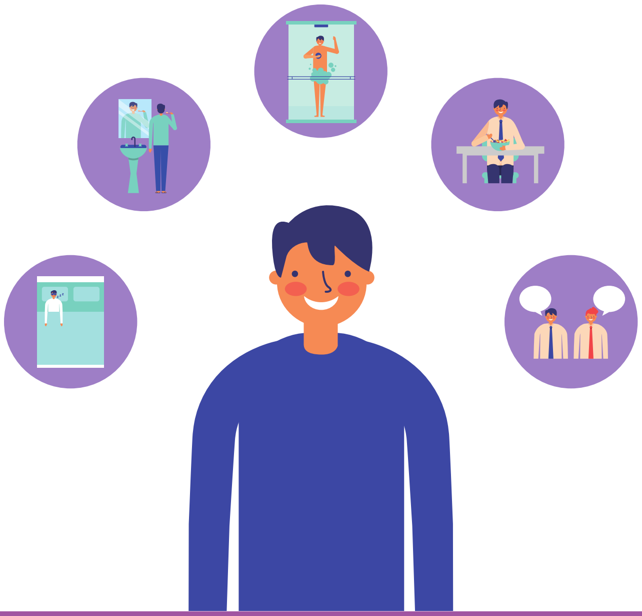
Explain if doing a task has significant negative consequences.

You may be able to complete PIP activities, but not without experiencing negative consequences. Negative consequences you might experience include:

- Distress, panic or meltdowns
- Confusion
- Shutdowns
- Pain
- Fatigue



Say what you experience, how it impacts you, and how long you experience these consequences. For example, exhaustion may last for 1-2 days after a shutdown, making it increasingly difficult to do your usual daily tasks.



Daily Living Activities

There are 10 activities of daily living which the DWP considers in PIP claims. When filling out this section, remember to tell the DWP about your difficulties in these areas. Talking about your strengths and interests can hide your difficulties.

Preparing Food

This is all about if you can safely and reliably prepare and cook a simple meal. “Simple meal” is defined as a cooked one-course meal for one using fresh ingredients.

Link to your condition

Tell the DWP if autism or other disabilities mean that you have difficulties preparing and cooking a meal. State clearly that your difficulties are due to your disability. You will not get any points in this category if you do not cook because you don’t want to or haven’t learnt to cook. Points are given if your disability affects your ability to cook.

Explain your difficulties

Give detailed information about specific barriers to preparing and cooking a meal. Explain what you have difficulty doing, or cannot do. You should explain if you have any co-occuring conditions which affect your ability to prepare food.

Some common difficulties for autistic people:

- Undercooking or burning food.
- Getting easily confused.
- Being unable to tell if food is safe (expired or undercooked food).
- Coordination difficulties.
    - Hurting yourself in the kitchen.
    - Needing pre-chopped vegetables (unable to chop them).
- Struggling with executive functioning and because of this:
    - Missing out necessary steps.
    - Getting stuck on certain steps.
    - Completing things in the wrong order.
- Unable to cope with things going wrong.
- Taking much longer to cook than it would take other people.
- Lacking motivation or forgetting to cook.

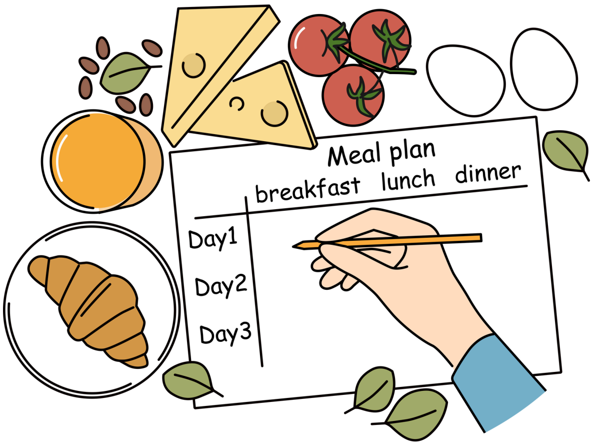
This is not a complete list. When writing about your own needs, add detail about specifically how you are affected.

Aids and Appliances

If you use aids or equipment to enable you to prepare a meal, explain what they are and why you use them.

In the PIP application, aids and equipment does not usually mean common cooking equipment but can include tools like:

- A visual timer
- Step-by-step plans
- Non-slip products
- Finger guards
- Electronic cutting tools



If you use a tool because of your disability, then mention it here. Link back to how aids and appliances help reduce a barrier caused by autism or other conditions. If a professional recommended that you use specific equipment, say so.

If you need an aid but cannot use it, let PIP know. For example, if you cannot use alarms to remind you of steps because the sound causes you distress or if you cannot use an electronic chopping tool because you have difficulties with coordination and cannot put the lid on to use it.

Support from Other People

Explain if someone else cooks your meals for you because you are unable to. If you need prompting or support to prepare and cook a simple meal, explain who helps you and how they help.

If you need this support but do not have it, then mention this. Tell the DWP what you do instead – for example, relying on takeaways or eating cereal or snacks.

Variation

Remember to explain any variability in how autism affects you. The decision maker should award points based on your ability to prepare and cook a meal on the majority of days.

They should consider if there is a significant impact at any point during a day. For example, you may be able to prepare breakfast for yourself, but struggle to cook any other meals later in the day.

Negative Consequences

Explain the impact of preparing and cooking a meal. You can tell the DWP if you experience any negative consequences, such as distress, pain or fatigue. If you are likely to experience meltdowns or shutdowns around this activity then let PIP know.

Explain how you are affected, giving detail about what happens. Explain how long it lasts and how long it takes you to recover from these effects.

Descriptors	**Points**
a. Can prepare and cook a simple meal unaided.	0
b. Needs to use an aid or appliance to be able to either prepare or cook a simple meal.	2
c. Cannot cook a simple meal using a conventional cooker but is able to do so using a microwave.	2
d. Needs prompting to be able to either prepare or cook a simple meal.	2
e. Needs supervision or assistance to either prepare or cook a simple meal.	4
f. Cannot prepare and cook food.	8

Eating and Drinking

Eating and drinking is also known as Taking Nutrition.

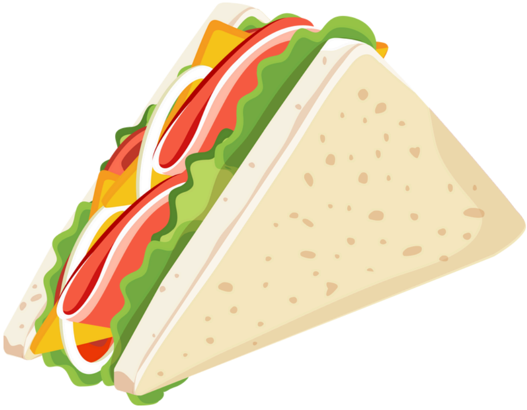
Points are not awarded for poor or limited diets or aversion to particular foods, unless it can be shown that you do not get adequate nutrition. You can get points if you need prompting or encouragement to eat or if you have physical barriers to eating and drinking.

Link to your condition

Tell the DWP if autism or other disabilities mean you have difficulties taking nutrition. State clearly that your difficulties in this area are due to your disability.

Explain your difficulties

Give information about specific barriers to eating and drinking. Explain what you have difficulty doing, or cannot do. You should explain if you have any co-occurring conditions which affect your ability to manage nutrition .



Some common difficulties for autistic people:

- Poor interoception – being unable to sense when hungry or thirsty or unable to sense when full, leading to overeating.
- Involuntary stims which frequently cause you to spill food and drink or hurt yourself.
- Motor coordination difficulties.
- Eating too quickly leading to choking.
- Sensory difficulties.
- Avoidant or restrictive food intake.
- Significant difficulty managing portion sizes.

This is not a complete list. When writing about your own needs, add detail about specifically how you are affected.

Aids and Appliances

If you use aids or equipment to enable you to eat or drink, explain what they are and why you use them.

Aids and equipment can include tools like:

- Adapted cutlery.
- Specialist cups.
- Straws.
- Divided plates.
- Plates made from a non-standard material.

If you use a tool because of your disability, then mention it here. Link back to how aids and appliances help reduce a barrier caused by autism or other conditions. If a professional recommended that you use specific equipment, say so.

If you need an aid but cannot use it, let PIP know. For example: if you cannot use weighted cutlery because your wrists are too weak.

Support from Other People

You should tell PIP if you need to be prompted to eat. This could be needed for various reasons including if you forget meals, if you don’t have the energy to eat, or if sensory difficulties make meals stressful for you.

You should explain who helps you and how they help. You should say if you need ongoing prompting throughout a meal.

Variation

Remember to explain any variability in how autism affects you. The decision maker should award points based on your ability to eat and drink on the majority of days.

They should consider if there is a significant impact at any point during a day. For example, you may be able to eat in the evening, but need support earlier in the day.

Negative Consequences

Explain the impact of eating and drinking. You can tell the DWP if you experience any negative consequences, such as distress, pain or fatigue. If you are likely to experience meltdowns or shutdowns around this activity, then let PIP know.

Explain how you are affected, giving detail about what happens. Explain how long it lasts and how long it takes you to recover from these effects.

Descriptors	**Points**
a. Can take nutrition unaided.	0
b. Needs – (i) to use an aid or appliance to be able to take nutrition; or (ii) supervision to be able to take nutrition; or (iii) assistance to be able to cut up food.	2
c. Needs a therapeutic source to be able to take nutrition.	2
d. Needs prompting to be able to take nutrition.	4
e. Needs assistance to be able to manage a therapeutic source to take nutrition.	6
f. Cannot convey food and drink to their mouth and needs another person to do so.	10

Managing Treatments

It’s really hard to get points here!

Managing Treatments is about medications, medical interventions and therapies you do at home.

One point is available for managing your medication or monitoring a health condition.

Most points in this category are awarded for prompting, supervision or assistance to do ongoing therapies. In this context, “therapy” means treatments to be undertaken at home which is prescribed or recommended by a registered doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or a health professional regulated by the Health Professions Council.

It can also include managing dietary treatments (e.g. dietary requirements for diabetes or epilepsy). You would need evidence from a dietician or other medical professional to show this.

Points here are often awarded for co-occurring conditions. If you have any ongoing therapies to treat or manage any condition, you should inform PIP of this. Let them know how frequently you need to do this and how long it takes for a session

Link to your condition

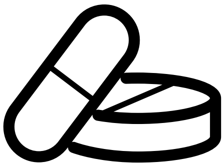
Tell the DWP if autism or other disabilities mean you have difficulties managing your treatments. State clearly that your difficulties are due to your disability.

Explain your difficulties

Give information and examples about specific barriers you experience when managing your treatments. You should explain if you have any co-occuring conditions which affect your ability to manage your treatments.

Some common barriers for autistic people include:

- Forgetting medications or taking multiple doses without realising.
- Adverse side effects with medication that impact daily functioning or require additional support.
- Struggling to take the right medication at the right time.
- Difficulties adapting to changes in your therapy routine.
- Difficulty following step-by-step instructions during home therapy.
- Difficulties transitioning from an activity to home therapy treatment.



Other barriers:

- Struggling to open medication containers.
- If you cannot take usual medication and need this in a different form.
- Having or previously had any types of therapy.

Aids and Appliances

Tell PIP if you need any specific aids or appliances in order to manage your treatments and take medication.

This may include:

- Needing medications delivered.
- Dosette box or specialised dispensers.
- Medication reminder timer.
- Pill popper to push the pills out the blister pack.

If you need an aid but cannot use it, let PIP know. For example: if you fail to take medication despite having an automatic pill dispenser.

Support from Other People

Tell PIP if you need someone else to fill a dosette box for you. Explain what happens if you don’t get this help.

You should tell PIP if you need prompting, supervision or assistance to take medications reliably and safely.

Variation

Remember to explain any variability in how autism affects you. The decision maker should award points based on your ability to manage your treatments on the majority of days.

They should consider if there is a significant impact at any point during a day. For example: You may be able to take your medication in the morning, but struggle to do so in the evening due to fatigue.

Negative Consequences

Explain the impact of managing your treatments. You can tell the DWP if you experience any negative consequences, such as distress, pain or fatigue. If you are likely to experience meltdowns or shutdowns around this activity then let PIP know.

Explain how you are affected, giving detail about what happens. Explain how long it lasts and how long it takes you to recover from these effects.

Descriptors	**Points**
a. Either – (i) does not receive medication or therapy or need to monitor a health condition; or (ii) can manage medication or therapy or monitor a health condition unaided.	0
b. Needs either – (i) to use an aid or appliance to be able to manage medication; or (ii) supervision, prompting or assistance to be able to manage medication or monitor a health condition.	1
c. Needs supervision, prompting or assistance to be able to manage therapy that takes no more than 3.5 hours a week.	2
d. Needs supervision, prompting or assistance to be able to manage therapy that takes more than 3.5 but no more than 7 hours a week.	4
e. Needs supervision, prompting or assistance to be able to manage therapy that takes more than 7 but no more than 14 hours a week.	6
f. Needs supervision, prompting or assistance to be able to manage therapy that takes more than 14 hours a week.	8

Washing and Bathing

This is about being able to get into an unadapted bath or shower, wash, and get out again. Washing means cleaning your whole body, including removing dirt and sweat.

It does not include drying yourself, but you can still tell PIP about any difficulties you have adequately drying yourself as this gives a fuller picture of the impact of your disability.

Link to your condition

Tell the DWP if autism or other disabilities mean you have difficulties washing and bathing. State clearly that your difficulties are due to your disability.

If you choose not to wash or choose to have extra-long baths and are happy about your choice, you will not be awarded points in this category.

Explain your difficulties

Give information and examples about specific barriers you experience when managing your treatments. You should explain if you have any co-occuring conditions which affect your ability to wash and bathe.

You may have unique sensory needs, especially when it comes to washing and bathing. This can cause distress, impacting your ability to wash and bathe. For example, you may be likely to burn yourself in the shower if someone does not check the temperature before hand.

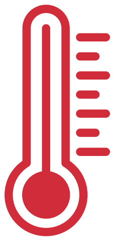
Some common difficulties for Autistic people include:

- If you are at risk of falls.
- Being unable to judge if the water temperature is safe.
- Prone to meltdowns around bathing due to the sensory challenges.
- Coordination difficulties.
- Struggling with knowing the steps of washing and when you are sufficiently washed.
- Becoming hyper-focused on one aspect of washing.
- Autistic executive functioning difficulties, making it hard to start or continue washing.
- Not recognising when you need to wash.

This is not a complete list. When writing about your own needs, add detail about specifically how you are affected.

Sensory difficulties

- Being hyper or hypo-sensitive (very or not very sensitive) to the feel of water touching the skin.
- Temperature changes between hot and cold.
- Scent of body wash.
- The difference in textures of being dry and wet.



Aids and Appliances

You should tell PIP if you are unable to use an unadapted bath or shower, or if you need to use a wet room.

Be aware that you could have a wet room or other adaptations, but might not be awarded points if you are able to wash in a standard bath or shower.

Aids could be things like:

- Needing a shower stool.
- Using a thermometer to check the water temperature.

Mention what happens if you do not get help or are not able to use an aid.

If you need an aid but cannot use it, let PIP know. For example, you may need to use a thermometer to check the temperature but struggle to read and understand these.

Support from Other People

You should tell PIP if you need prompting or support to wash. You should explain who helps you and how they help.

Variation

Remember to explain any variability in how autism affects you. The decision maker should award points based on your ability washing and bathing on the majority of days.

They should consider if there is a significant impact at any point during a day.

Negative Consequences

Explain the impact of washing and bathing. You can tell the DWP if you experience any negative consequences, such as distress, pain or fatigue. If you are likely to experience meltdowns or shutdowns around this activity, then let PIP know.

Explain how you are affected, giving detail about what happens. Explain how long it lasts and how long it takes you to recover from these effects.

Descriptors	**Points**
a. Can wash and bathe unaided.	0
b. Needs to use an aid or appliance to be able to wash or bathe.	2
c. Needs supervision or prompting to be able to wash or bathe.	2
d. Needs assistance to be able to wash either their hair or body below the waist.	2
e. Needs assistance to be able to get in or out of a bath or shower.	3
f. Needs assistance to be able to wash their body between the shoulders and waist.	4
g. Cannot wash and bathe at all and needs another person to wash their entire body.	8

Using the Toilet and Managing Incontinence

It is difficult to get points in this category without a co-occurring condition or high support needs.

Managing toilet needs covers being able to get onto and off a toilet, using the toilet, and cleaning yourself afterwards.

It does not include getting to the toilet or taking clothes off to be able to use the toilet, although if you have these difficulties, you can get points in under other questions (dressing and undressing, moving around).

Link to your condition

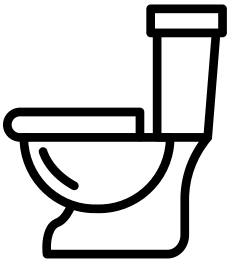
Tell the DWP if autism or other disabilities mean you have difficulties using the toilet and managing incontinence. State clearly that your difficulties are due to your disability.

Explain your difficulties

Give information and examples about specific barriers to managing toilet needs and incontinence. You should explain if you have any co-occuring conditions which affect your ability to manage your toilet needs.

Some common difficulties for autistic people include:

- Having poor interoception and being unaware of the need to use the toilet which may lead to urge incontinence.
- Needing to use absorbent underwear.
- Soiling yourself.
- Difficulty cleaning yourself after using the toilet.
- Forgetting to wash your hands.



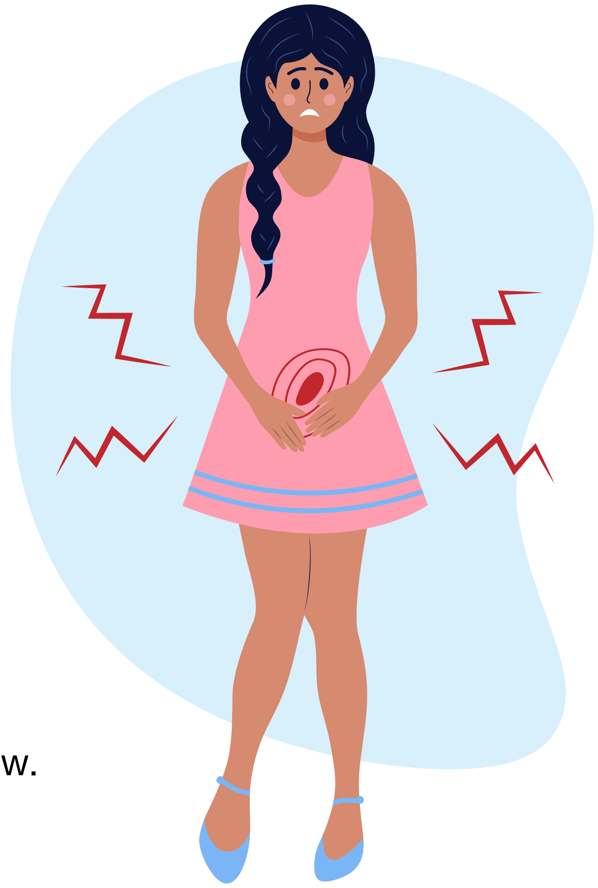
This is not a complete list. When writing about your own needs, add detail about specifically how you are affected.

Aids and Appliances

Tell PIP if you need to use any aids or adapted equipment. These might include:

- Raised toilet seats
- Incontinence pads
- Large easy push lever
- Step to raise your feet.

If you need an aid but there are other reasons you cannot use it, let PIP know.



Support from Other People

You should tell PIP if you need prompting or support to manage your toilet needs, including washing your hands. You should explain who helps you and how they help.

Variation

Remember to explain any variability in how autism affects you. The decision maker should award points based on your ability to manage your toilet needs on the majority of days.

They should consider if there is a significant impact at any point during a day.

Negative Consequences

Explain the impact of toileting. You can tell the DWP if you experience any negative consequences, such as distress, pain or fatigue. If you are likely to experience meltdowns or shutdowns around this activity, then let PIP know.

Explain how you are affected, giving detail about what happens. Explain how long it lasts and how long it takes you to recover from these effects.

Descriptors	**Points**
a. Can manage toilet needs or incontinence unaided.	0
b. Needs to use an aid or appliance to be able to manage toilet needs or incontinence.	2
c. Needs supervision or prompting to be able to manage toilet needs.	2
d. Needs assistance to be able to manage toilet needs.	4
e. Needs assistance to be able to manage incontinence of either bladder or bowel.	6
f. Needs assistance to be able to manage incontinence of both bladder and bowel.	8

Dressing and Undressing

Dressing and Undressing is about putting clothes on and taking them off when needed, including changing in and out of pyjamas, going to the toilet and going outside.

It also covers choosing clothes that are appropriate (for example, clothes that are suitable for the weather, or that are clean).

Link to your condition

Tell the DWP if autism or other disabilities mean you have difficulties dressing and undressing. State clearly that your difficulties are due to your disability.

You will not get points in this category if the decision maker determines that how you dress and undress is due to your personal choices, so remember to link your actions to your autism.

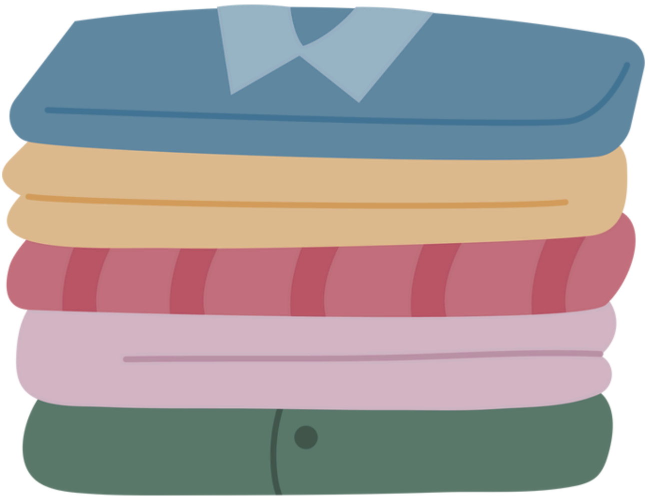
Explain your difficulties

Give information and examples about specific barriers to dressing and undressing. You should explain if you have any co-occurring conditions which affect your ability to dress and undress.

Some common difficulties for Autistic people include:

- Coordination challenges.
- Needing specialised items and clothes.
- Sensory issues causing you to become distressed due to the feeling of clothes, or certain fabrics.
- Difficulty keeping clothes on where it is socially expected to be dressed.
- Difficulty regulating body temperature, leading to overheating or shivering and not being able to resolve the issue.
- Unable to wear some types of clothing, for example if you cannot fasten buttons or tie laces.
- You may be likely to hurt yourself when dressing or undressing.
- Getting confused or taking much longer to get dressed than it would take other people.
- Choosing appropriate clothes - for example, needing to be reminded to wear a coat in rainy weather.

This is not a complete list. When writing about your own needs, add detail about specifically how you are affected.



Aids and Appliances

If you use aids or equipment to enable you to get dressed or undressed, explain what they are and why you use them. If a professional advised you to use particular equipment, say so.

This might include:

- A button hook.
- A zip puller.
- Velcro shoes, rather than laces.
- Specialised items such as seem-free clothing.

Remember to explain why you need this adaptation and link it to your disability. If you need an aid but there are other reasons you cannot use it, let PIP know.

Support from Other People

You should tell PIP if you need prompting or support to manage dressing and undressing. You should explain who helps you and how they help.

Mention what happens if you do not get help or are not able to use an aid. For example, it takes twice as long to get dressed or undressed or you cannot get dressed at all without support.

Variation

Remember to explain any variability in how autism affects you. The decision maker should award points based on your ability to dressing and undressing on the majority of days.

They should consider if there is a significant impact at any point during a day.

Negative Consequences

Explain the impact of dressing and undressing. You can tell the DWP if you experience any negative consequences, such as distress, pain or fatigue. If you are likely to experience meltdowns or shutdowns around this activity, then let PIP know.

Explain how you are affected, giving detail about what happens. Explain how long it lasts and how long it takes you to recover from these effects.

Descriptors	**Points**
a. Can dress and undress unaided.	0
b. Needs to use an aid or appliance to be able to dress or undress.	2
c. Needs either - (i) prompting to be able to dress, undress or determine appropriate circumstances for remaining clothed; or (ii) prompting or assistance to be able to select appropriate clothing.	2
d. Needs assistance to be able to dress or undress their lower body.	2
e. Needs assistance to be able to dress or undress their upper body.	4
f. Cannot dress or undress at all.	8

Talking, Listening and Understanding

This is also referred to as Communicating Verbally. This activity and *mixing with other people* can be confusing and often trip people up. Communicating Verbally is all about if you are able to speak and understand speech.

This section is not about if you don't follow social norms in your communication as this comes under *mixing with other people*. It is also not about being able to remember information long term.

If you are unsure which section to put your answer, you can include it in both sections.

Link to your condition

Tell the DWP if autism or other disabilities mean you have difficulties talking, listening and understanding. State clearly that your difficulties are due to your disability.

An example of what may go in here as a supporting statement includes: "I have autism, which involves having difficulties with communication". Follow this with specific examples of challenges you face, such as difficulty processing spoken information, trouble expressing yourself verbally, or struggles with understanding speech.

Explain your difficulties

You should let PIP know about your difficulties with talking, listening and understanding and how this affects you. You should also explain if you have any co-occuring conditions which affect your speech or hearing.

Some common difficulties include:

- A stammer or speech impediment.
- Struggle to process and understand what others say.
- Agreeing to things without understanding them, out of politeness, or as a strategy to finish meetings, or for other reasons.
- Fluctuations in verbal communication (for example: non-speaking in unfamiliar or stressful situations).
- Needing others to use Plain English or otherwise adapt their language to communicate with you.
- Needing someone to interpret or explain your communication so others can understand you.
- Getting distracted by other stimuli when speaking and needing prompting from other people to finish your sentences.

This is not a complete list. When writing about your own needs, add detail about specifically how you are affected.

Aids and Appliances

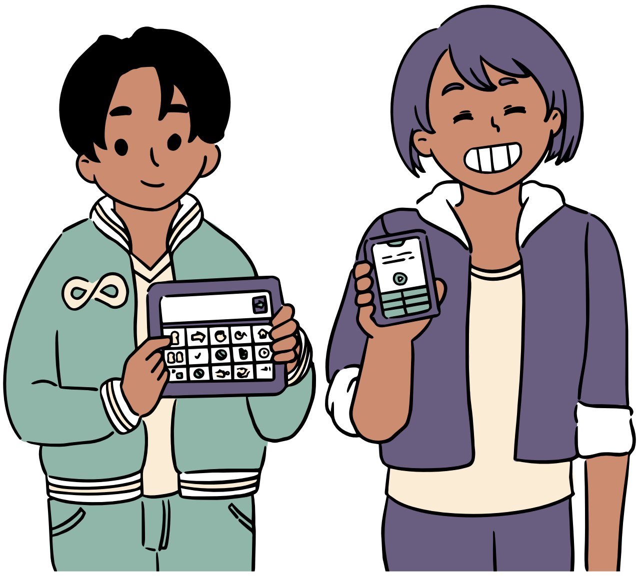
If you use aids or equipment to enable you with talking, listening and communicating, explain what they are and why you use them. If a professional advised you to use particular equipment, say so.

Some common aids include:

- Hearing aids.
- Communication boards or cards.
- Communication apps to speak or hear e.g. Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Software.

If you need a communication aid and cannot use it, then please explain the impact this has. For example, you may lose communication skills during a meltdown. Using alternative communication such as picture cards might be an appropriate aid in this situation.

But if you also struggle with cognitive and executive functioning during meltdowns, you might need another person to support you to use the communication aids or you might not be able to use them at all.



Support from Other People

You should tell PIP if you need prompting or support with talking, listening and understanding. You should explain who helps you and how they help.

Mention what happens if you do not get help or are not able to use an aid. For example, you may not be able to understand what other people mean without the support from someone else.

Variation

Remember to explain any variability in how autism affects you. The decision maker should award points based on your ability to speak, listen and understand on the majority of days.

They should consider if there is a significant impact at any point during a day.

Negative Consequences

Explain the impact of talking and listening. You can tell the DWP if you experience any negative consequences, such as distress, pain or fatigue. If you are likely to experience meltdowns or shutdowns around this activity, then let PIP know.

Explain how you are affected, giving detail about what happens. Explain how long it lasts and how long it takes you to recover from these effects.

Descriptors	**Points**
a. Can express and understand verbal information unaided.	0
b. Needs to use an aid or appliance to be able to speak or hear.	2
c. Needs communication support to be able to express or understand complex verbal information.	4
d. Needs communication support to be able to express or understand basic verbal information.	8
e. Cannot express or understand verbal information at all even with communication support.	12

Reading

This section is about reading signs, symbols and words. You should consider your ability to read simple and complex sentences in a standard text size. For example, think about your ability to read and understand things like a letter from your GP, a household bill or emergency exit signs. It is not about being able to remember information long term.

Link to your condition

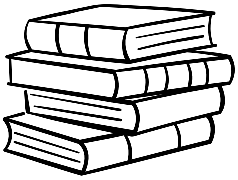
Give information and examples about specific barriers to reading. You should explain if you have any co-occurring conditions which affect your ability to read.

Explain your difficulties

Tell the DWP if autism or other disabilities mean you have difficulties reading. State clearly that your difficulties are due to your disability. You should also explain if you have any co-occuring conditions which affect your ability to read.

Some common difficulties for autistic people include:

- Finding it hard to understand information in letters, emails, or other written pieces of information.
- Struggling to pick out key information in chunks of text.
- Having to read sentences multiple times.
- Experiencing visual overwhelm from text.
- Difficulties understanding non-literal language, such as metaphors, idioms, and sarcasm leading to misunderstandings or confusion.



This is not a complete list. When writing about your own needs, add detail about specifically how you are affected.

Aids and Appliances

If you use aids or equipment to enable you with reading, explain what they are and why you use them. If a professional advised you to use particular equipment, say so.

Aids may include:

- Easy-to-Read format of information .
- Specialised computer program that reads words aloud.
- Picture dictionary.
- Needing different colour paper or overlays.

You should explain what tools and software you use and how they help you, including all the functions you benefit from. If you need a reading aid but there are other reasons you cannot use it, let PIP know.

Support from Other People

You should tell PIP if you need prompting or support with reading. You should explain who helps you and how they help. For example, you may need someone to confirm you understood what was written, or you may need them to read it aloud for you, or summarise the content.

Mention what happens if you do not get help or are not able to use an aid.

Variation

Remember to explain any variability in how autism affects you. The decision maker should award points based on your ability to read on the majority of days.

They should consider if there is a significant impact at any point during a day.

Negative Consequences

Explain the impact of reading. You can tell the DWP if you experience any negative consequences, such as distress, pain or fatigue. If you are likely to experience meltdowns or shutdowns around this activity, then let PIP know.

Explain how you are affected, giving detail about what happens. Explain how long it lasts and how long it takes you to recover from these effects.

Descriptors	**Points**
a. Can read and understand basic and complex written information either unaided or using spectacles or contact lenses.	0
b. Needs to use an aid or appliance, other than spectacles or contact lenses, to be able to read or understand either basic or complex written information.	2
c. Needs prompting to be able to read or understand complex written information.	2
d. Needs prompting to be able to read or understand basic written information.	4
e. Cannot read or understand signs, symbols or words at all.	8

Mixing with other people

Mixing with other people is about how your condition makes it difficult to meet and mix with others face-to-face, judge situations when you're with other people and behave appropriately, as well as establishing relationships with others.

This isn't just about chatting or being around other people. It includes understanding and dealing with the complexities of social situations, which can be tough due to sensory sensitivities, anxiety, or needing extra support in these situations.

Link to your condition

Tell the DWP if autism or other disabilities mean you have difficulties mixing with others. State clearly that your difficulties are due to your disability.

You may wish to say something similar to: "I have autism, which involves having difficulties with social communication and social interactions".

Explain your difficulties

Give information and examples about specific barriers related to mixing with others. You should explain if you have any co-occuring conditions which affect your ability to interact with others.

Some common difficulties autistic people experience:

- Difficulty understanding social cues, such as tone of voice, body language, or facial expressions.
- Difficulty initiating social interactions.
- Vulnerability to exploitation, manipulation or abuse.
- Difficulty understanding personal space.
- Difficulty managing reactions, such as aggressive behaviour.
- Feeling overwhelmed in social situations or actively avoiding them.
- Not understanding when people are joking or being serious.
- Not understanding non-literal language leading to misunderstandings and added anxiety.

This is not a complete list. When writing about your own needs, add detail about specifically how you are affected.

If challenges in engaging with others face to face has led to any strained relationships, mention this here. This may include estrangement from loved ones and social isolation. This isolation may impact mental well-being and daily functioning.

Difficult relationships may also limit the amount of practical support and assistance obtained that could help to improve the quality of life. It may also impact on your work or professional relationships, leading to loss of jobs.

Explain how your disability affects your ability to engage effectively with services (GP, Dentist etc.), communicate your needs, as well as the potential impacts it can have on your social and mental wellbeing.

Aids and Appliances

There isn’t a descriptor awarding points for needing aids and appliances but you should still mention any you use.

For example:

- Social stories.
- Brain-in-hand app.

If you need an aid but there are other reasons you cannot use it, let PIP know.

Support from Other People

You should tell PIP if you need prompting or support from others when mixing with people. You should explain who helps you and how they help.

Be specific about your difficulties, even if you do not currently have the support you need. Explain how much you avoid these situations and how it affects your daily life.

Variation

Remember to explain any variability in how autism affects you. The decision maker should award points based on your ability to mix with others on the majority of days.

They should consider if there is a significant impact at any point during a day.

Negative Consequences

Explain the impact of mixing with other people. You can tell the DWP if you experience any negative consequences, such as distress, pain or fatigue. If you are likely to experience meltdowns or shutdowns around this activity, then let PIP know.

Explain how you are affected, giving detail about what happens. Explain how long it lasts and how long it takes you to recover from these effects.

Descriptors	**Points**
a. Can engage with other people unaided.	0
b. Needs prompting to be able to engage with other people.	2
c. Needs social support to be able to engage with other people.	4
d. Cannot engage with other people due to such engagement causing either – (i) overwhelming psychological distress to the claimant; or (ii) the claimant to exhibit behaviour which would result in a substantial risk of harm to the claimant or another person.	8

Managing Money

This section is about managing everyday purchases and transactions. You should consider your ability to do complex and simple budgeting tasks.

Simple budgeting includes:

- Paying in shops and restaurants.
- Being able to work out what change you need.

Complex budgeting includes:

- Budgeting for and paying your bills.
- Saving up for larger purchases.
- Planning for future purchases.

It does not matter how much money you have. What is important is whether you understand and can make decisions about money.

Link to your condition

Tell the DWP if autism or other disabilities mean you have difficulties managing money. State clearly that your difficulties are due to your disability.

Explain your difficulties

Explain your difficulties. Give information and examples about specific barriers to managing money. You should explain if you have any co-occurring conditions which affect your ability to manage your money.

Some common difficulties for autistic people include:

- Struggling to understand money and the price of items.
- Forgetting bills and not paying them on time.
- Being impulsive with spending.
- Being excessively trusting and giving away money without thinking.
- Difficulty arranging direct debits or scheduling payments.
- Needing someone to explain the financial break down of certain payments, and informing you if you are paying too much, or too little.
- Not understanding payment in shops or restaurants.
- Not being able to work out the what change should be given.

Aids and Appliances

There isn’t a descriptor awarding points for needing aids and appliances, but you should still mention any you use. Using online banking or banking apps would not count as an aid or appliance in this context.

Support from Other People

Tell the DWP if you need prompting or support when managing money. Explain who helps, and how they help.

Mention what happens if you do not receive this help, such as becoming more tired, overwhelmed and exhausted as well as getting into financial struggles. If you need help but do not get it. Explain how they would help you.

Variation

Remember to explain any variability in how autism affects you. The decision maker should award points based on your ability to manage your finances on the majority of days.

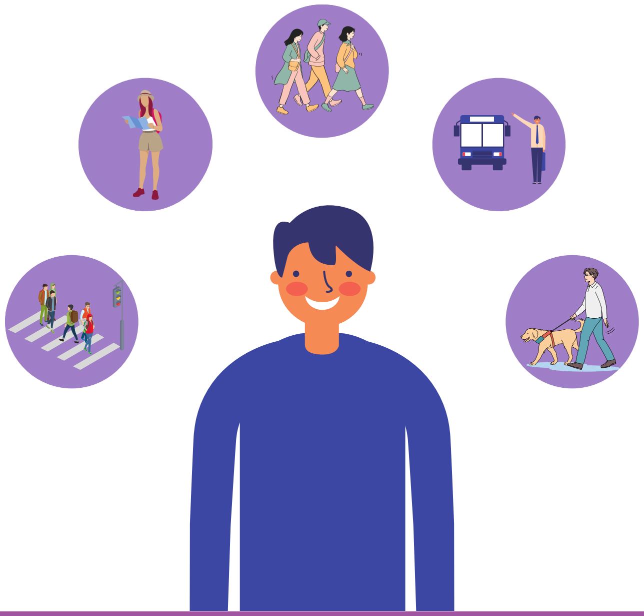
They should consider if there is a significant impact at any point during a day.

Negative Consequences

Explain the impact of managing money. You can tell the DWP if you experience any negative consequences, such as distress, pain or fatigue. Say if you are likely to experience meltdowns or shutdowns around this activity.

Explain how you are affected, giving detail about what happens. Explain how long it lasts and how long it takes you to recover from these effects.

Descriptors	**Points**
a. Can manage complex budgeting decisions unaided.	0
b. Needs prompting or assistance to be able to make complex budgeting decisions.	2
c. Needs prompting or assistance to be able to make simple budgeting decisions.	4
d. Cannot make any budgeting decisions at all.	6



Mobility Activities

There are 2 PIP activities related to mobility. When filling out this section, remember to tell the DWP about your difficulties in these areas. Talking about your strengths and interests can hide your difficulties

Planning and Following a Journey

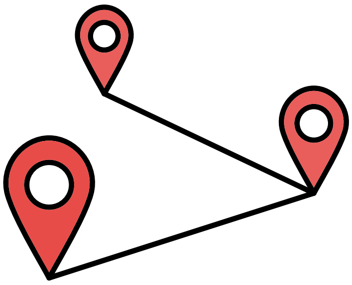
This activity includes planning a journey in advance, starting a journey by leaving the house, and following the intended route.

The DWP want to know about long and short journeys, as well as familiar and unfamiliar journeys. A journey can be using any method of transport, such as public transport, walking, or driving.

You may not make any journeys at all. If the reason for this is linked to your disability, then it is still relevant and its important for you to explain what difficulties you would have if you were to attempt a journey.

Link to your condition

Tell the DWP if autism or other disabilities mean you have difficulties planning and following a journey. State clearly that your difficulties are due to your disability.



Explain your difficulties

Explain your difficulties. Give information and examples about specific barriers to following and planning journeys. You should explain if you have any co-occurring conditions which affect your mobility.

Some common difficulties for autistic people when planning and following a journey include:

Working out the route you need to take

You might struggle to understand maps, timetables or navigation apps, leading to confusion or getting lost easily.

Changes or delays

You might find it overwhelming to adjust plans due to disruptions, like cancellations, diversions or traffic jams.

It may be that you always go the same route to work or the shops. If this is disrupted and causes you to be seriously delayed or not go at all, then this is important to mention.

Stress or anxiety

Travelling might induce significant anxiety, panic attacks, or meltdowns leading to you not going out altogether, or limiting the amount of times you can leave the house.

Large crowds or noises

Crowded or noisy public transportation and environments might trigger sensory overload, leading to stress or meltdowns.

Motivation to leave the house

You may need someone to encourage you before you can go out. This may be more apparent after meltdowns, or during autistic burnout or shutdowns.

Proprioception

This is how our body senses movement and space. If you have trouble with proprioception, it may be hard to move safely, navigate crowded places, or avoid obstacles.

Following Journeys Safely

You may have trouble keeping yourself safe when travelling alone. For example, you may be unaware of how to cross the road or you may be at risk from other people.

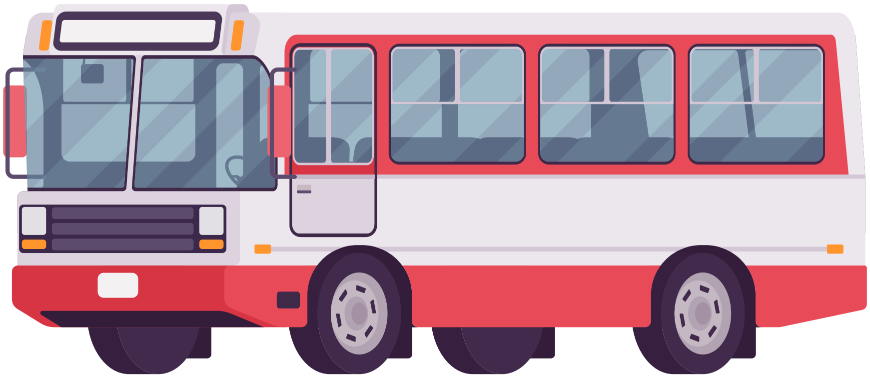
Spontaneous travel

You may need a lot of preparation time before travelling, for example, to plan your route in detail, mentally prepare, and plan coping strategies for the journey.

This can make spontaneous travel difficult, or impossible for you. This might mean you miss last-minute doctors appointments, social or work events, and community activities.

Providing specific examples and detailing how these difficulties impact your ability to plan and undertake journeys is helpful for accurately reflecting your needs and experiences in the PIP assessment.

For example, if there have been occasions where following the route of a journey has not gone well due to your disability, then this will be good evidence to use in the form.



Aids and Appliances

If you use aids or equipment to enable you to plan and follow a journey, explain what they are and why you use them. If a professional advised you to use particular equipment, say so.

- Step-by-step travel instructions.
- Large print maps.
- Route planning services.
- Adapted GPS devices, including systems which provide information on the surroundings as well as route.
- Trained assistance dog.

If you need an aid but there are other reasons you cannot use it, let PIP know.

Support from Other People

You should tell PIP if you need prompting or support with planning and following journeys. You should explain who helps you and how they help.

Mention what happens if you do not get help or are not able to use an aid. For example, if someone cannot assist you on your journey then this may lead to not going out at all, or experiencing substantial distress when travelling.

Variation

Remember to explain any variability in how autism affects you. The decision maker should award points based on your ability to plan and follow a journey on the majority of days.

They should consider if there is a significant impact at any point during a day.

Negative Consequences

Explain the impact of planning and following a journey. You can tell the DWP if you experience any negative consequences, such as distress, pain or fatigue. Say if you are likely to experience meltdowns or shutdowns around this activity.

Explain how you are affected, giving detail about what happens. Explain how long it lasts and how long it takes you to recover from these effects.

Descriptors	**Points**
a. Can plan and follow the route of a journey unaided.	0
b. Needs prompting to be able to undertake any journey to avoid overwhelming psychological distress to the claimant.	4
c. Cannot plan the route of a journey.	8
d. Cannot follow the route of an unfamiliar journey without another person, assistance dog or orientation aid.	10
e. Cannot undertake any journey because it would cause overwhelming psychological distress to the claimant.	10
f. Cannot follow the route of a familiar journey without another person, an assistance dog or an orientation aid.	12

Moving Around

The points here are awarded based on your ability to stand up and walk for a particular distance. You are unlikely to be awarded this for autism without a co-occurring condition.

You should tell the DWP if walking causes pain, fatigue, or if takes you a long time because you walk very slowly or need to take frequent rest breaks. You can follow the structure outlined in the other activities.

Descriptors	**Points**
a. Can stand and then move more than 200 metres, either aided or unaided.	0
b. Can stand and then move more than 50 metres but no more than 200 metres, either aided or unaided	4
c. Can stand and then move unaided more than 20 metres but no more than 50 metres.	8
d. Can stand and then move using an aid or appliance more than 20 metres but no more than 50 metres.	10
e. Can stand and then move more than 1 metre but no more than 20 metres, either aided or unaided.	12
f. Cannot, either aided or unaided, – (i) stand; or (ii) move more than 1 metre.	12

Final Checklist

When answering questions in the PIP document, have you said:

☐ **What condition causes you the problem?**
Clearly identify the condition or disability that contributes to your difficulties.

☐ **What are the specific struggles you have?**
Provide detailed descriptions of the challenges you face in performing the tasks, including specific examples.

☐ **Do you use any aids, prompts or appliances?**
Mention any tools or support you use to assist with the task.

☐ **Do you or should you have help from another person?**
How do they help you or what help do you need but do not have.

☐ **Are there times of day or days of the week when you have more difficulties?**
Be careful to avoid language such as “good” or “bad” days as the assessor may misinterpret this.

☐ **Do you experience negative consequences?**
Describe any negative side-effects from undertaking tasks.

Remember to include in your answers:

When answering the questions in the PIP form, remember to talk about the following. Link back to your disability, and provide examples.

1) Time:

Does it take you longer to perform the task compared to someone without your condition?

2) Safety:

Are you safe to carry out these tasks alone? Is there a danger to you or anyone else?

3) Standards:

How well can you do it? Does it cause you any pain or fatigue?

4) Repeatedly:

Can you do it as often as required?

5) Sensory factors:

Explain how factors like noise, lighting, or crowded spaces may affect your ability to perform the task.

6) Executive and cognitive function:

Explain any cognitive challenges you face in performing the task, such as memory difficulties or trouble with decision-making.

7) Mental health impacts:

If relevant, discuss how the task affects your mental health, including anxiety, stress, meltdowns and shutdowns.

Other guides in the series:

Core Guides:

Guide 1: Starting Your PIP Claim

Guide 2: How Your Disability Affects You ←

Guide 3: Assessments

Guide 4: Understanding Your PIP Award

Guide 5: Appeals

Guide 6: Renewing PIP

Supplementary Guides:

- Definitions
- PIP Evidence
- Reasonable Adjustments
- Mental Wellbeing Through the PIP Process

Autism AIM

The Advonet Group
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