

How to create an Accessible & Inclusive Halloween party!

Invitations 📅

Invitations often just give time and place, but many Autistic people need more information to know if the space will feel safe for them or their family, as events are often planned without Autistic people in mind.

- Include the number of guests and location of the party (indoors/ in one room/ across different spaces) so they can see if there will be space to move around if needed. Share photos of the space to help them picture the party and reduce anxiety.
- Include dress code, activities, and what to bring so they know what is expected and what support they might need.
- Ask what you as the host can do to accommodate them. You do not need to know exactly what is needed, but asking shows you understand it might be a great effort for them to attend.
- If they don't feel this event will be comfortable them, think about how else you can meet up with them this Halloween, and always continue to invite unless asked not to.

Planning Food and Drinks 🍽️

If you have sensory sensitivities to food, or indeed a medical diagnosis around food restrictions, the thought of the food at a party can stop you attending that party.

- Serve food in one area, if possible, serve foods that do not touch, provide more than one plate per person so they can have options, and have a visible 'bland' option (e.g., plain crackers, chips). If appropriate, invite them to help prepare or bring food as this may reduce anxiety.
- Showcase nonjudgement to your fellow guests. If you see someone eating in what you consider an 'unusual' way, do not comment. Accept that there is a reason for what you see, but you might not need to know this reason at this time.

Planning Halloween Activities and Games 🎃

Activities and games can be a highlight of a Halloween party, but for some people, they can also feel overwhelming. Not knowing what is planned, feeling pressure to join in, or having social rules that are too rigid may create stress rather than fun.

- Tell guests the plan, offer support, and update them if things change.
- Choose activities that can be opted in or out of, done individually (e.g., colouring) or in groups.
- Create a quiet break space if possible and give space if someone becomes upset and ask, "What do you need?" rather than jumping in.
- Don't make comment on who is joining or who is or isn't wearing a costume.

Creating an Accessible & Inclusive Home for Trick-or-Treaters

Every year, thousands of children and young people across Ireland go trick-or-treating around their neighbourhood. Unfortunately, many Autistic children and young people don't go (although many may want to), because they or their family member know they won't feel safe or included.

Small changes in every home in Ireland can make the biggest difference!

- If two adults are handing out treats, consider one in costume and one not. This helps children who might be frightened or confused by costumes have one safe option.
- Children may communicate 'trick or treat' in different ways, through speech, gestures, or communication devices, and with or without eye contact. They are still 'trick or treating'.
- Some children will wear full costumes, others may not. Costumes can be uncomfortable or confusing for some, so avoid singling anyone out.
- Trick-or-treaters can be any age, and some may need a parent or carer with them, while others may go alone. Avoid commenting on age.
- Expect that some children may wait at the start of your driveway or hallway while their family member goes door to door.
- Consider having some low cost 'non-food' items for selective eaters. Stickers or bubbles are two good options here.
- Some children may say 'no' to food, and this isn't bad manners. They may be worried about eating something unfamiliar.
- If a child takes more than they were offered and their parent or carer doesn't say anything, assume they understand the reason this may be a difficult situation for their child to understand the social rules of, or be in.
- Halloween noise can be overwhelming. Fireworks, bangers, or bells may feel threatening. If a child shows signs of noise distress (e.g., wearing headphones or covering their ears), consider how you can reduce the noise your house is creating.
- Remember what trick-or-treating is for; to bring people joy, connect communities, and create memories. Doing this in different ways doesn't take away the fun, it might create the first fun Halloween a child or family has ever had!
- If you have taken the above on board and want to show your neighbourhood that all 'Trick or Treaters' are welcome, use the decal in our pack to communicate that you believe in 'Halloween for All'.