

NASA's Neurodiversity Network

Eclipse Guide

Remember:
These tips are helpful for
all populations, not just
neurodiverse learners!

What is Neurodiversity?

Neurodiversity refers to the range of differences in individual brain function and behavioral traits.

Someone who is neurodivergent has a brain that functions differently from the neurotypical population, leading to unique strengths, challenges and perspectives.

Autism is one form of neurodivergence. Autistic people may respond differently to sensations that others may not think twice about. Here are some strategies to help neurodivergent learners feel safe and ready to enjoy eclipse experience.

Embed interests

Prior to the eclipse, learn about the learner's special interests and then find ways in which these interests relate to the eclipse event. Use these interests to assist in your teaching and support.

Setting expectations

Explain the physical changes that the learner will experience during a total solar eclipse including visible changes in light intensity, changes in ambient sound levels and sudden changes in temperature. The "What to Expect" videos listed through the QR code below are useful for setting expectations around the level of light at totality, how others may react and how long totality is expected to last.

Be safe!

Make sure participants know when and how to use special eclipse glasses. Demonstrate the use and provide a visual schedule that shows when and how long to wear the glasses during the event.

Provide visuals

Provide your learner with pictures of what the Sun will look like at each stage of the eclipse. There is a video in the resources below that you may use to visualize what the level of light will be, as well as how other people around you may react (laughing, cheering, clapping). Allow the learner to spend as much time with each visual as they need.

- Pictures of the Sun at various stages of the eclipse
- What the sky will look like before/after/during totality
- Any schedule specific to your group: when to arrive at the viewing location, duration of totality, etc.

Prime the learner and establish clear expectations

Priming supports executive function. Ask the learner what they expect to experience, so you can support their interests and identify any potential concerns. Demystify the experience, and be sure to include verbal check-ins through the various stages of the eclipse. If someone has never experienced a total solar eclipse before, the arrival of totality can be very jarring!

- Clapping and cheering
- Temperature drops
- Light level drops
- Eclipse glasses may be removed ONLY during totality. If they remain on it may be too dark to see the eclipse.

For more info:

Scan the QR code to learn more about supporting neurodiverse learners and access the online content mentioned in this flyer.

