

# Kids with autism do well learning new words: study

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(HealthDay)—Children with autism learn new words the same way as

other children do, but it takes them longer, a small study found.

The researchers compared 15 [children](#) with [autism](#), aged 18 months to 7 years, and a control group of 15 children without the [developmental disorder](#).

A series of tests showed that both groups of children relied heavily on the same technique to learn new words—they followed a teacher's gaze as the teacher named an object, the investigators found.

The children with autism were able to follow the teacher's eye movements 75 percent of the time, compared with 78 percent of the time for children in the [control group](#), the study findings showed.

Most children with autism have trouble making eye contact with other people under certain conditions, so therapists strive to encourage them to make [eye contact](#), according to the researchers from Ohio State University.

"A lot of good work has gone into targeting this skill in kids with autism. It's considered a pivotal skill—looking at other people and monitoring eye movement," Allison Bean Ellawadi, director of the Autism & Child Language Learning Laboratory at Ohio State, said in a university news release.

"We found that if we use eye gaze in a meaningful way, and in a consistent pattern, kids with autism will pick it up on their own, and they'll learn new words," Ellawadi added.

The study was published recently in the *International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders*.

**More information:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention has more on [autism](#).

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