

Comic strip template: *My Journey*



Use the following template to create your own comic strip about going to a social event. Remember to show how you get ready, any help you need, and how you feel before, during and after your journey there.

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Q&A with Spencer



We asked autistic artist and animator Spencer to create a short animation. His video ***My Journey*** shows how every autistic person is different by following the day-to-day experiences of two young autistic people called Douglas and Sarah. We caught up with Spencer and asked him a few questions about autism, his art and what inspired the video.

When were you diagnosed as autistic?

I don't remember, but I realised I felt different from my peers when I was at college or high school. My mother says I was diagnosed at two-years-old.

What is being autistic like for you?

For me personally, it's more to do with the behaviour and mentality of others and how I would like people to treat me the same way as their non-autistic friends, colleagues and peers.

When did you become an artist and animator?

Drawing is my favourite hobby. My mother tells me I didn't speak until I was five-years-old and the only way I communicated was through drawings. My art skills helped me get into university and, as the years have gone by, I've pursued a career in the art and design industry. Since graduating, I've worked as a freelancer for the National Autistic Society and previously, Google.

We love your artwork and your style is so unique! What inspires you?

I usually experiment with different styles. I'm also inspired by Manga, which is a Japanese style of art and go with my family to many Japanese exhibitions – including Comic Con, of course! I also enjoy ceramics and graphic design.

Why do you think increasing public understanding of autism is so important?

It is important to help society understand every autistic person is different. As I am seeking employment, I think it's especially important to make employers aware of autistic people's many talents. Autistic people should be seen as a positive asset in every aspect of society.

What is the animation you created for World Autism Acceptance Week about and how did you come up with the design?

For this World Autism Acceptance Week short film, I used a bold and simple style for the main characters, as it's animation friendly. To emphasise how every autistic person is different, I focused on two autistic characters. They go through the exact same morning routines as they prepare to go outside.

Douglas, the boy, has high support needs and his mother helps him with things like waking up in the morning, washing and dressing.

The girl, Sarah, is also autistic but does not have high support needs. She is more independent than Douglas, but unlike him, she is very anxious about going out in public and the dangers presenting themselves with every step she takes.

I have a cousin who has high support needs, so I thought it was important to include some of her strengths and challenges – that's what inspired me to create this animation.

Quiz: Spencer's view



"Autistic people should be seen as a positive asset in every aspect of society."

1. When did Spencer realise he was different?

(Choose one)

- a) When he was two
- b) When he was at primary school
- c) When he was at college or high school

2. When did Spencer start to speak?

(Choose one)

- a) Aged two
- b) Aged five
- c) Aged eight

3. How did Spencer communicate before he started to speak?

(Choose one)

- a) Through sign language
- b) Through drawing
- c) By pointing

4. Who has Spencer worked for?

(Choose two)

- Google
- Facebook
- Amazon
- The BBC
- National Autistic Society
- Design Council

5. Which THREE THINGS does Spencer mention enjoying?

- Life drawing
- Ceramics
- Graphic design
- Textiles
- Manga
- Oil painting

6. Read these statements regarding Spencer's feelings about autism and mark them TRUE or FALSE

- a) He wishes people would treat him differently from non-autistic people.
- b) He believes that all autistic people are different.
- c) He thinks most employers are aware of autistic people's talents.
- d) He thinks autistic people have the same job opportunities as non-autistic people.

7. Who inspired Spencer to create *My Journey*? (Choose one)

- a) His brother
- b) His mother
- c) His cousin
- d) His sister

8. Name THREE THINGS Douglas needs support with in the morning

9. What TWO WORDS does Spencer use to describe Sarah?

Answers

1. c) When he was at college or high school. 2. b) aged five. 3. b) Through drawing. 4. National Autistic Society and Google. 5. Manga, ceramics and graphic design. 6. a) F, b) T, c) F, d) T. 7. c) His cousin. 8. Waking up, washing and dressing. 9. Independent, anxious.

