

## Social Stories

A Social Story is a short visual story that describes a situation or social skill that an individual child is having difficulty understanding. The aim of the story is to provide the child with insight into the situation and to enable them to respond more appropriately to it.

There are all kinds of social stories you can write. They can be used to:

- Explain how others might feel or react in a certain situation (including the child/ young person)
- Help a child or young person cope with change in routine or unexpected events (like a fire drill)
- Assist with expected or unexpected behaviours (how to sit on the carpet)
- Accomplish self-care skills (such as toileting)
- Describe what will happen at an event



## Advice and Recommendations

### Preparation for writing a Social Story

- Observe the child in the 'problem' situation and make detailed notes in order to obtain a complete picture of events
- Through the observation, through talking to other staff, to parents and if appropriate, to the child, try and establish how the child perceives the situation. (It is particularly important to try and understand the child's perceptions and feelings when writing a social story)

### 3 Top Tips for Writing a Social Story

1. The child's perspective determines the focus of the story
2. Write in the first person, from the perspective of the child, e.g., I can sit in my calm corner for quiet time
3. Be positive e.g., I am good at football

Use these types of sentences:

**Descriptive sentences = what happens? E.g., I play in the playground**

**Perspective sentences = how do people feel? E.g., Sometimes I get upset when it is noisy**

**Directive/Coaching sentences = what will you try to do? E.g., I can put on my ear defenders when it is too loud**

**Affirmative Sentence: E.g., Being calm is good for me**

**Good words to use:**

Usually...

Often...

Sometimes...

Next, I...

I will try to...

If I do this, \_\_\_\_\_ may feel...

I will feel...

**Add some pictures**



Next, you will need to add some pictures to the story. Put the picture above the text so there is a clear link between the picture and the sentence. The pictures should be clear and represent the meaning of the story. If you can, use visual support pictures or actual photographs of the child and the chosen situation.

**Introduce And Read the Story**

This is one of the most important steps in creating a social story, and one that tends to be forgotten. While the crafting and content of a social story are, of course, important, you also need to set aside ample amounts of time to read the story to the child. Make sure you choose the opportune time, introducing the social story when the child is in an amenable, approachable mood and ready to learn.



Read through the story several times and have the child read along if possible. You can also discuss personal experiences and make connections to real-world situations to make the story even more relevant.

**Practice And Provide Feedback**

After reading the story several times, consider role-playing to help further your child's understanding of the expectations. Use positive feedback when your child displays the expected behaviour after the social story is used, and don't throw the stories out when you think you might be finished with them. Hang on to them and keep them accessible so you can reread and practice more as necessary.

Examples of Social Stories:

**A change in my day**

At school there are changes

Sometimes I need to stop and choose something different

Sometimes I don't want to stop

I can put my toys on my finished table to play again later

**My Hands**

I can use my hands for lots of things. I can use my hands for...

touching writing drawing playing eating high fives

waving clapping hugging counting building holding

Hands are not for hitting or pushing people

Hitting and pushing hurts and makes us sad

I can make a good choice, everyone will be happy

Pic of young person.

Insert pic of home toilet

Insert pic of school toilet.

(Name) can use the toilet.

**When things are too loud**

Sometimes I can hear loud noises

Useful Links:

- 'The new Social Story Book' by Carol Gray (1994 future Horizons, Arlington)
- 'My Social Stories Book' by Carl Gray and Abbie Leigh White (2002 Jessica Kingsley).
- 'Writing and Developing Social Stories – Practical Interventions in Autism' by Caroline Smith (2003 Speech mark).
- [Social Stories](#)