

SOCIAL STORIES™

WHAT ARE SOCIAL STORIES™

Social Stories™ were developed by Carol Gray (1991). They are short stories written in response to a child's individual needs. Each story provides the child with clear, concise and accurate information about what is happening in a specific social situation. Each story seeks to **PROVIDE THE CHILD WITH INFORMATION** and answers to key questions:

- What is happening?
- Who is doing what?
- Why is it happening?
- What are the reasons or 'rules' that govern what people are doing?
- What are the typical socially acceptable responses for the individual in the specific situation?

BENEFITS OF USING SOCIAL STORIES™

- Support a **VISUAL LEARNING STYLE**: pictorial and permanent and can be referred back to
- **ADAPTABLE** to individual needs: their perspective, language level and understanding
- Target **THEORY OF MIND**

SOCIAL STORIES™ CAN BE USED TO:

- Explain a social situation
- Provide information about future events
- Give reassuring information
- Help to teach a new skill
- Provide problem-solving and self-regulation strategies.

Although the goal of a social story should never be to change the individual's behaviour, an improved understanding of events and expectations may lead to more effective and appropriate responses. By writing about familiar experiences and affirming what your child already does well, your child can feel safe and open to receiving information about new skills.

WRITING SOCIAL STORIES™

Social Stories™ should always be written in a clear, positive and supportive manner to promote your child's understanding of a situation. A focus of the story can be found by considering the "who," "what," "where," "when" and "how" components of the social situation.

Include the following features:

- **STORY FORMAT** - a title, beginning, middle and end.
- **FIRST OR THIRD PERSON PERSPECTIVE** e.g. "I will try to wait for my turn" or "Mum will be happy when I try to wait for a turn." Negative information can be shared in a positive way by using third person perspective e.g. Instead of saying "I often get angry" you could write, "Many children get angry sometimes."



- **ONE** aspect or step per page
- **POSITIVE** words such as “I will try to...” and “I may...” These words allow for flexibility and help to coach your child in a positive manner. Avoid using words such as “should,” “shouldn’t,” “bad” or “tricky.”
- The words to a Social Story™ can be presented along with **CLEAR AND INFORMATIVE PICTURES**. You can draw pictures, use clipart or photographs to support the written information. Try to use pictures that your child will understand and that accurately portray the situation. However, pictures are not essential in a Social Story™.
- Specific sentence types outlined below:

Type of sentence	Description	Example
DESCRIPTIVE	These sentences objectively define where a situation occurs, who is involved, what they are doing or why.	<i>“At my school, children usually eat their lunch in the playground.”</i>
PERSPECTIVE	These sentences describe the reactions or feelings of others in a given situation.	<i>“Some children like to earn stickers for packing away.” “My mum may feel happy if I learn to use the toilet.”</i>
COACHING (a) DIRECTIVE (b) CO-OPERATIVE (c) SELF-COACHING	a) These are individualised statements to describe or guide how the child might respond. b) These are sentences that describe what others can do to assist the child. c) These are sentences chosen together with the child to remind the child of what to do in specific situations. These sentences can provide an opportunity for the child to learn to ‘self-talk’.	<i>“I will try to keep my seat belt fastened.” “Mrs. Clark will try to give me more time to complete each science test.” “When some-one says, “Sit on the mat,” I will try to look for my special cushion to help me sit.”</i>
AFFIRMATIVE	These sentences enhance the meaning of the situation or their surroundings. Express commonly shared opinions.	<i>“Sometimes a student is absent. This is ok.” “To stay safe, children take turns going down the slide. This is very important.”</i>
PARTIAL	These sentences encourage the child to guess the next step or the response of another individual to their actions.	<i>“My sister sleeps in her bed. My brother sleeps in his bed. Mum and dad sleep in their bed. I sleep _____.”</i>

A story needs to include **TWICE AS MANY ‘DESCRIBING’ AND ‘PERSPECTIVE’ SENTENCES AS ‘COACHING’ SENTENCES** to give the child enough information to accurately understand the situation. This also supports problem-solving in situations.

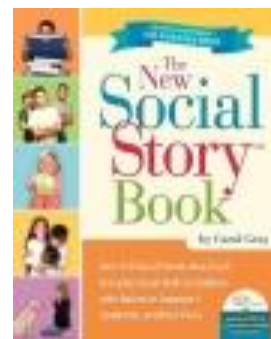
If you would like more assistance with writing Social Stories™, specific guidelines can be downloaded from:
<http://www.thegraycenter.org/social-stories/how-to-write-social-stories>

This website also contains several examples of social stories and information related to implementing Social Stories™. “The New Social Stories Book: 10th Anniversary Edition” is also recommended with specific instructions of how to write social stories and examples of Social Stories™ for the classroom. This resource can be purchased through the link above.

USING A SOCIAL STORY™:

INTRODUCING

- Introduce one story at a time.
- Find a quiet place with the least possible distractions.
- Make sure everyone has a copy.
- Make sure other adults know what it is and how to use it.
- Reading the story:
 - Read it with your child
 - Your child can read it out loud to you or others
 - Others can read it out loud to your child.
- A reading of a particular story can be recorded on audio tape with a tone or verbal cue for the child to turn the page.
- The child and an adult can act out scenes from the stories with small figurines or props. ‘Feely’ pages or objects in ziplock plastic bags can be attached to particular pages. This can add interest and increase understanding of the concepts for children who have early literacy skills.
- A video could be made of your child and peers acting out applicable scenes from the story. The written story can be presented along with the video when it is presented to the child.
- You could use iPad apps to create your own e-story.
- Develop a consistent time schedule to review the story, especially before the situation occurs.
- Ensure that the story is accessible for your child so they can review it at any time.



REVIEW

- Monitor the effectiveness of the story.
- Give a two week time frame for noticing a difference in understanding of the situation.
- If the story is not successful, it may need to be reworked. Remember that if you are teaching a new skill, a Social Story alone will not be sufficient support. It is one strategy.
- Increase the amount of time between reviewing the story.
- Keep the Social Story™ visible and accessible to the child even when the skill is mastered. The child may enjoy the routine of reading the story, particularly as it is about them.
- Keep a collection of the stories.

Remember that it is important to **WRITE AND SHARE MANY POSITIVE SOCIAL STORIES™** with your child. These stories can be about skills that the child has mastered already, situations that they are comfortable in, things they are good at or about their special interest. This makes introducing stories about new skills or challenging situations much easier.