How to Write a Social Story

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Writing a Social Story

Carol Gray created social stories in 1991 to help teach social skills to people with autism. They are short descriptions of a particular situation, event or activity, which include specific information about what to expect in that situation and why.

Social stories were developed in order to support individuals with autism to better cope with social situations.

**What is a Social Story?**
A Social Story can be a written or visual guide describing various social interactions, situations, behaviors, skills or concepts.

A Social Story describes a situation, skill, or concept in terms of relevant social cues, perspectives, and common responses in a specifically defined style and format. The goal of a Social Story is to share accurate social information in a patient and reassuring manner that is easily understood by its audience.’

**Points to consider:**

- Social stories need to have an introduction, body and conclusion and should use positive language (i.e. where possible, describe what should happen, rather than what should not)

- Stories need to be as accurate as possible and should include words like sometimes and usually for situations where a particular outcome is not guaranteed

- Stories should appeal to the interests of the person for whom they are written. Avoid using words that may cause the person anxiety or distress

- The content and presentation of social stories should be appropriate to the person's age and level of understanding.
The following are some pointers for tailoring social stories for people of different ages and abilities.

- If writing for a child, write from the first person perspective (I will try to wait until it is daytime before I get up in the morning).

- Pair age-appropriate photographs, picture symbols or drawings with text to help people who have difficulty reading or for younger children.

- When writing for young people or adults, use the third person perspective (they, he, she) and adjust language and presentation accordingly. You could use a smaller font size, or present the story in columns as in a newspaper article.

Teach with the title

Select a title, which accurately reflects the overall meaning of the story. Titles can be a question (What is lightning?) or a statement (Lightning), but need to communicate the most important concept of the story.

Example: How to wash my hands
People usually wash their hands using soap and water. There are five steps I will try to follow when washing my hands. An adult can help me learn these steps.
In this section:

The Goal
Consider the social story's purpose. For example, the goal may be to teach a child to cover their mouth when coughing.

Now think about what the child needs to understand to achieve this goal. For example, they need to understand why covering their mouth when coughing is important, i.e. it stops germs from being spread which may make other people sick.

*Turn tap on.*

*Put soap on hands.*

*Wash hands together under water.*

*Turn tap off.*

*Dry hands on towel.*
Apps for iPad and iPhone

- First then visual schedule
- Choiceworks

I'm a young man
I'm growing up
Sometimes my underarms will sweat and feel wet
Sometimes they will smell bad

Now I need to wash with soap and water every day
I dry off
I put on deodorant
It keeps my underarms dry

Now I smell good!
I will put on deodorant every day before I put on clothes
Deodorant helps
Now it's part of my daily routine
First Then Visual Schedule

Choiceworks
I may have to wait for my turn to talk, for the bus, or to go somewhere that I want to go.

If I wait with a quiet mouth and a calm body then I know I did a good job and my teachers and family will be proud of me!