

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE

INFORMATION SHEET FOR EARLY YEARS PRACTITIONERS

Why, when and how to write a Social Story

Why write a Social Story?

Helps teach children routines, expectations, and behavioural standards in an alternative way

Reinforces correct behaviour

Information presented in an accessible story format

Provides visual examples of behaviour expectations

Provides a more personalised and tailored behavioural intervention

Helps involve children in the learning process

Works well with children with social communication and interaction difficulties

When to write a Social Story?

When a child struggles to grasp social norms, routines, and expectations through the usual teaching and social methods

When a child has a diagnosis of ASD or appears to be experiencing a social communication need

When a child needs reinforcement to aid their understanding of (for example) social rules, self-care, procedures and daily routines

To prepare the child for a new situation, to address a specific problem behaviour, or even to teach new skills in conjunction with reinforcing responses

How to write a Social Story

Begin by observing the child in the situation you are addressing. Decide on the main focus / goal. Try to take on the child's perspective and include aspects of his or her feelings or views in the story. Also, include usual occurrences in the social situation and the perspective of others along with considering possible variations.

There are three main types of sentences used in writing social stories:

1. Descriptive sentences: objectively define anticipated events where a situation occurs, who is involved, what they are doing, and why. (e.g., When people are inside, they walk.)
2. Perspective sentences: describe the internal status of the person or persons involved, including their thoughts, feelings, or moods. (e.g., I like to run.)
3. Directive sentences: are individualised statements of desired responses stated in a positive manner. They may begin "I can try..." or "I will work on..." Try to avoid sentences starting with "do not" or definitive statements. (e.g., I will try to walk inside.)

A social story should have 3 to 5 descriptive and perspective sentences for each directive sentence. Avoid using too many directive sentences. Write in first person, using specific, positive language which meets the child's developmental skill level. Also remember to use pictures that fit within the child's developmental skill level to supplement text.

Examples of social stories can be found at:

<http://carolgraysocialstories.com/social-stories/social-story-sampler/>
<https://depts.washington.edu/hscenter/downloads>

The New Social Story Book by Carol Gray
(These are likely to need adapting prior to use)

Example of a Social Story

Aim: to reinforce the rule of walking inside.

Running

I like to run. (perspective)

It is fun to go fast. (perspective)

It's okay to run when I am playing outside. (descriptive)

I can run when I am on the playground. (directive)

Outside



Sometimes I feel like running, but it is dangerous to run when I am inside.
(perspective / descriptive)

Running inside could hurt me or other people. (descriptive / perspective)

When people are inside, they walk. Walking inside is safe. (descriptive)

I will try to walk inside and only run when I am outside on the playground.
(directive)

My teachers and parents like it when I remember to walk inside.
(perspective)

Inside

