

Social Stories

What are Social Stories?

Social stories are short stories that present a child with a common situation, with suggestions on how to behave or communicate in that situation. Social stories are a trademarked tool created by Carol Gray in 1991.

A social story is defined as a story that describes a situation, skill, or concept in terms of relevant social cues, perspectives, and common responses in a specifically defined style and format. A social story needs to meet some very specific criteria. Detailed information on how to create and use social stories can be found in Carol Gray's book, *The New Social Story Book*.

Social stories are effective because they provide a child with ideas about an appropriate response in different situations. They help to reinforce desired behaviors, and can be personalized to a child's unique situation.

Social stories can be used in a variety of situations, including new situations, where a child may not know what to expect, situations where a child has previously displayed inappropriate behavior, or even situations which make a child anxious or uncomfortable. They are especially effective in showing children how to follow routines, rules and social norms.

Social Story Example

Below, in [blue text](#), is an example of the content in a social story. You can view the story and images, plus two other complete social stories in the online module. Note that social stories are usually written in first person, from the perspective of the child you are teaching.

Andy loves playing on the slide. At times, he has a hard time waiting for his turn when there are other children playing on the slide as well.

Andy Takes Turns on a Slide

I like playing on the slide. Other children also like playing on the slide. Sometimes, I have to wait for my turn on the slide. To wait for my turn, I stand in a line behind another child. Someone may stand in line behind me. Each person in line waits for their turn on the slide. When it is my turn, I can climb up the slide and then slide down. When I get to the bottom of the slide, I can get up. Then, I can go to the end of the line and wait for my turn again. I might have fun taking turns and playing on the slide.

Conclusion

Please note that each story has an end goal. This is an important part of a social story. Also, the story has a title that clarifies its purpose.

The stories we shared also listed out the steps in the story, including what each person in the story may do, feel and think. They are descriptive, simple and literal. This helps a child focus on the end goal. The language used in a social story is always positive. Some social stories can include pictures, and these work especially well for children who do not use verbal/spoken language to communicate. As far as possible, social stories also answer questions about what, who, where, how and why.

Now that you know what social stories are, and how they can be useful, you can ask your child's therapist for help writing social stories. These types of stories are a great way for you to clarify what you expect of your child in different situations. For more information on social stories, you can also read Carol Gray's book, *The New Social Story Book*.