Social Stories™

Social Stories™ provide guidance for responding to social situations by clarifying social expectations.

The stories aim to promote an individual's self-awareness, self-calming and self-management.

They may use images or words to present the situation.

Who for

Social Stories™ can help any individual of any age who experiences challenges with appropriate social communication.

How to use

Identify a situation in which the student is having difficulty understanding or exhibiting appropriate behaviour.

Some common topics include:

- responding to cues in the environment (e.g. fire drills)
- describing other people's points of view (e.g., some people like loud music)
- defining new routines (e.g. changing classes),
- outlining rules and expectations (e.g. having a substitute teacher),
- or describing an unfamiliar future event (e.g. school trip).

Write the text of the story.

Social Stories™ are usually written in first person from the student's perspective using positive, reassuring language to explain the situation and/or target behaviour. Question words can support the explanation e.g. who, what, when, where and why.

Two main types of sentences are used in social stories: 1) descriptive and 2) directive.

1. Descriptive sentences:
   - State the facts (e.g., “My name is ___.” Or “The teacher is standing.”)
   - Include thoughts and feelings of the student and others in the story (e.g., “The teacher will like it when I listen.” Or “Many people want to learn.”)
   - Identify what others can do to help the student if help is needed (e.g. “If I feel upset, my teacher can help by___.”)
• Express a shared opinion or reassure the student (e.g. “This is okay.”).

2. Directive sentences:
   • Identify possible responses (e.g. “If I need a break, I can tell the teacher or put the break card on my desk and go to the beanbag.”).
   • Gently direct behaviour (e.g., “I will try to ____.”).

Maintain a ratio of at least 2 descriptive sentences for every directive sentence.

Making the story more descriptive than directive is recommended.

You might consider enlisting the student’s help in generating some of the content.

Adding pictures/photo’s may help to enhance the student’s understanding of the text. Try to tailor the format to the abilities and interests of the student and include what will likely happen if he/she correctly performs the target behaviour(s).

Share the story with the student.

New stories should be read frequently and prior to the challenging situation.

The story can be read less frequently as the student begins performing the appropriate behaviours. Eventually, the Social Story™ may no longer be needed.

For some students, periodic reading of the social story may continue to be beneficial long-term.

Assess the effectiveness of the story once the story has been used for a full week.

If students are not yet beginning to exhibit more appropriate behaviours, stories may need to be rewritten or paired with more visual supports to remind students of the desired behaviours or reinforcements systems.

The person might like to be filmed acting out the social story. He or she can watch the filmed story.

**Similar resources**

- Visual guides
- Film guides
- Other types of personal books