

Quick Tips: Using Social Stories

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Tip One—Make Sure You Understand the Situation from the Child’s Perspective.

- Before beginning to writing a Social Story, determine exactly which skill or situation on which to focus. In order to do this, start by observing the child in the situation you are addressing with the story, so that you can see it through the child’s eyes.
- Try to take on the child’s perspective and include aspects of his or her feelings or views in the story. A Social Story is intended to be written from the perspective of the child, so it is paramount that the writer is able to obtain that person’s unique perspective.

Tip Two—Make the Story Interesting and Engaging for the Child.

- Social stories are often written in a book format using visuals (photographs, picture symbols, drawings) to help aid understanding and with one concept per page.
- The child can also hand-illustrate pages of the story with pictures representing various sentences.
- The story can be read then recorded on audio with a tone or verbal cue for turning the page.
- Stories can be written into a “power point” file (as one would create a power point presentation from Microsoft office); the child can “read” his story by viewing the power point presentation on a computer. An “I-Movie” can also be created to make the “I-Story” more interesting to the student.
- A video could be made of children acting out scenes from the story, with the written story presented along with the video when it is presented to the child.
- The story can be reviewed using “role play” where the child and others acts out scenes from the story themselves or with small figures, rooms made of shoeboxes, etc.

Tip Three—Avoid Writing Overly Negative, Directive Social Stories.

- Sometimes authors attempt to make the story too directive in an effort to try to “order” the child to change his/her behavior. Social Stories are *not* meant to force children to comply with our wishes. Replace phrases like “I must” and “I will” with “I will try to” or “I will work on”; use “usually” and “sometimes” instead of “always”.
- Try to avoid using negative sentences. For example, the focus of a Social Story should *never* be “Not Hitting at School”. The story should explain the situation that usually causes the student to hit and explain replacements that the child can use instead of hitting to deal with the situation.
- Other mistakes to avoid include writing a story too vaguely, incorrectly identifying the motivation behind the behavior, making it a “chore” or a punishment to read the story rather than a pleasant experience, not making the story interesting enough for the individual to want to read, and not individualizing the story enough by re-using a story written for another individual.

Tip Four—Determine the Best Time to Review the Story.

- When first introducing it, the story must be reviewed often (daily). Stories are usually reviewed every day for a month (or more, if needed).
- Develop a consistent schedule for when to review the story at a “neutral time” of day.
- The story can also be reviewed *before* the targeted situation to remind the child of what will follow (i.e., just before recess, etc.).
- Do *not* wait to read the story until after a problem has already occurred or read it only in response to misbehavior.

Related Resources and Materials

- Free, downloadable examples of social stories can be found at the following sites:
 - <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/strategies.html#scriptedstories>
 - <http://www.pbisworld.com/tier-2/social-stories/>
- For information about StoryMaker™, an app for creating and presenting social stories, go to: <http://kidcompanions.com/new-carol-gray-social-story-app-available/>