

What Is a Social Story?

A Social Story is a short, personalized story written for your child that describes a specific social situation, explains what is happening and why, and suggests appropriate ways to respond. Social Stories were developed by Carol Gray and are widely used to help children — especially those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) — understand social expectations and feel less anxious about new or challenging situations.

Social Stories work by giving your child clear, concrete information about what to expect, how others might feel, and what they can do. Many children struggle not because they are unwilling to behave appropriately, but because they do not fully understand the social situation.

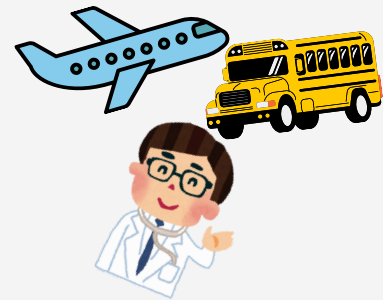


Who Can Benefit From Social Stories?

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Social Stories are most commonly used for children with:

- Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)
- Developmental delays
- Anxiety about new situations or changes in routine
- Difficulty with social skills or peer interactions
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)



They can also be helpful for any child who needs extra support understanding a specific social situation, such as going to the dentist, starting a new school, or learning to take turns.

What Can Social Stories Help With?

Social Stories can be written for almost any situation. Common examples include:

- Going to the doctor or dentist
- Riding the school bus
- Handling transitions (e.g., moving to a new classroom, a new sibling arriving)
- Taking turns and sharing
- Managing feelings like anger or frustration
- Lunchtime or recess behavior
- Fire drills or other unexpected events
- Bedtime routines
- Greeting people or making friends



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How To Write a Social Story

Step 1: Identify the situation.

Choose one specific situation your child finds difficult or confusing. Be as specific as possible (e.g., "waiting in line at school" rather than "being patient").

Step 2: Write from your child's perspective.

Use first person ("I") or third person ("Sam") depending on what your child responds to best. Write at your child's reading and comprehension level.

Step 3: Include these types of sentences:

- Descriptive sentences — Describe what happens in the situation.
 - Example: "Sometimes at school, the fire alarm rings. It makes a loud sound."
- Perspective sentences — Explain how others might think or feel.
 - Example: "My teacher wants everyone to be safe. She might look serious, but she is not angry."
- Coaching sentences — Gently suggest what your child can do.
 - Example: "I can cover my ears if the sound is too loud. I will try to walk with my class to the door."
- Affirmative sentences — Reassure your child.
 - Example: "This is a good thing to practice. My teacher will be proud of me for staying calm."

Important: Use more descriptive and perspective sentences than coaching sentences. A good rule of thumb is to have at least 2 descriptive or perspective sentences for every 1 coaching sentence. The story should feel informative and supportive — not bossy.

Step 4: Keep it short and positive.

- Use 5–10 short sentences for younger children.
- Avoid words like "must," "always," or "never." Instead, use gentle language like "I will try to..." or "Sometimes I can..."
- Focus on what your child CAN do, not what they should NOT do.

Step 5: Add pictures (optional but helpful).

Photos, drawings, or simple clip art can help your child understand the story, especially for younger children or those who are visual learners.



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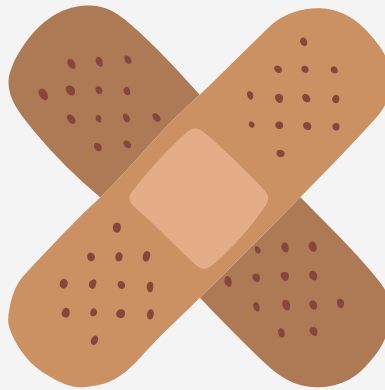
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Sample Social Story: Going To The Doctor

- > My name is Alex. Sometimes I go to the doctor for a checkup.
- >
- > The doctor's office has a waiting room with chairs and sometimes toys or books.
- >
- > A nurse might call my name and take me to a room. She might check how tall I am and how much I weigh.
- >
- > The doctor will look in my ears, eyes, and mouth. This does not hurt, but it might feel a little funny.
- >
- > Sometimes I might need a shot. A shot pinches for just a second, and then it is done. I can take a deep breath or squeeze a stuffed animal.
- >
- > My mom (or dad) will be with me the whole time.
- >
- > Going to the doctor helps keep me healthy. I can try to be brave, and it is okay to feel a little nervous.



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How To Use a Social Story

- **Read the story with your child before the situation happens.** For example, read a story about a doctor visit several days before the appointment.
- **Read it multiple times.** Repetition helps your child remember and feel prepared. Aim to read the story at least 5–6 times before the event.
- **Read it at a calm time.** Choose a quiet moment when your child is relaxed — not when they are already upset.
- **Talk about it together.** After reading, ask your child if they have questions. Let them point to pictures or act out parts of the story if they want to.
- **Update the story as needed.** As your child grows or the situation changes, revise the story to keep it relevant.
- **Celebrate success.** After your child handles the situation, praise their effort: "You did a great job staying calm at the doctor!"



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