

Social stories

What are social stories?

Social Stories are short descriptions of situations, events or activities which include information about what you might expect in that situation and why.

They support children to understand how to behave in the situation. They are commonly used with children with autistic traits but are useful for many children who are struggling to understand social situations or change. Half of all Social Stories written should affirm something that an individual does well.

They were developed by Carol Gray, Director of The Gray Center for Social Learning and Understanding in Grand Rapids, Michigan. There are useful guidance online for Social Stories with lots of examples you can adapt. HTPD works closely with outside agencies such as Freemantles Outreach and NAS (National Autism Society). They support some of our SEND pupils and they take part during staff INSET at HTPD.

What to use social stories for?

Social stories can help pupils in the following ways:

- To develop self-care skills (e.g. hand washing) and social skills (e.g. sharing)
- To develop understanding of how others might behave in a particular situation
- To help children cope with changes in routine or unexpected or upsetting events
- As a behavioural strategy

How do social stories work?

Social stories present information in a clear written or pictorial way which supports the child to work through the situation and understand it. The story provides guidance about the situation and how the child or others should or might behave.

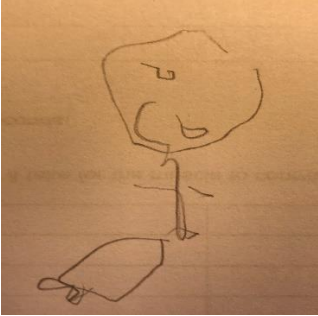
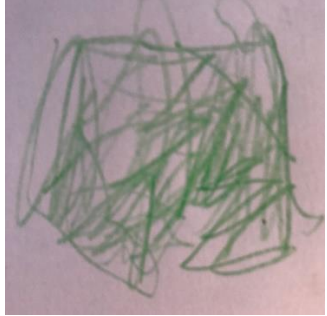
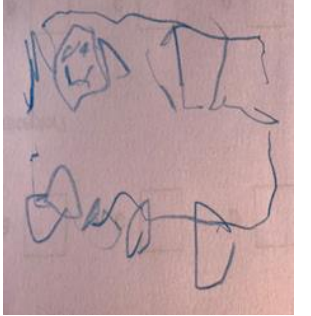
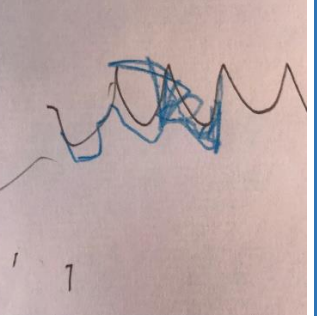
How to write a social story?

- Identify what you want to achieve and what your child needs to understand to do this
- Gather any information you might need e.g. When does this situation occur? How long does it last? What happens in this situation?
- Your story should have a title, introduction, main section and conclusion.
- Use supportive language which reflects your child's language skills, age and interests.
- Your story should answer six questions: **where, when, who, when, how and why**.
- Include descriptive sentences which describe the situation:
 - **where** it occurs, **who** is there, **what** happens and **why** e.g.
It is healthy for Tom to wash his hands when they are dirty. Tom can wash his hands in the sink in the classroom when he comes in from break time. Tom can use his special soap, he likes the smell of the soap. He runs the water, rubs the soap all over his hands and fingers and rinses the bubbles off. Tom dries his hands on the blue paper towel. He enjoys the feeling of clean dry hands.
 - And coaching sentences e.g.
When Carrie goes to the Wild place on a Monday, she will try and hold an adult's hand as she walks calmly on the path, next to the road. This will help keep Carrie safe because she loves to walk to the Wild place with her friends.
 - Add pictures or ask your child to illustrate the story to help your child understand that the story is about them. The younger your child, the more pictures they will need.

Using a social story

- Read the story with you child when they **are calm and away from the situation** in question.
- Read the **same story repeatedly over a number of weeks**. Your child will need to hear it a number of times before they will be able to follow and use the information.
- Don't expect an immediate change.
- Focus on one story at a time or your child may become confused.
- This is an example of a story SENCo at HTPD has written and the child had spaces to illustrate.

Going swimming with my class

<p>1. My teachers and TAs are there to help me when I go swimming.</p> <p>I can trust my teachers to make good decisions and keep me safe so I need to follow their instruction.</p>	<p>2. I will come in from break to collect kit and coat then wait for my class to board the bus.</p>	<p>3. I will be given a seat at the front of the bus where I will sit with Carol and I will put my seatbelt on for the whole journey and she will tell me when to take it off.</p>	<p>4. At the Spectrum I will walk up the ramps then down into the changing room with Carol. I will go into the changing cubicle that she tells me to, get changed and then put all my stuff in the bag to be put in with the class's things.</p>
			
<p>5. I will then go to the toilet when Carol tells me and wait at the entrance to the pool and wait for my class. When we are all lined up the swimming teachers will come and get us and tell us what we must do to swim safely.</p>	<p>6. I will have a great time in the water and enjoy the lesson. Carol will be at the side of the pool but the swimming teacher is in charge and I will follow instructions. When the lesson has finished I will get out when I am asked to.</p>	<p>7. I will go and get changed in the small cubical and then go with Carol up to the exit and wait by the notice boards for my class to go past and get on the bus. I will then get on the bus in my space and put on my seatbelt for the journey back to school.</p>	<p>8. I will get off the bus at school with Carol and go to the office to sign in before I go to Class. When I do as my teachers and TAs tell me, I have a great time at swimming each week.</p>
