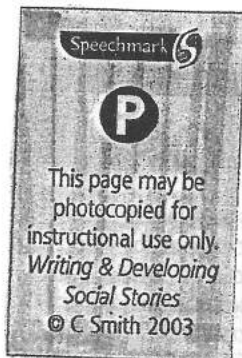


Handout

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# Social stories:

## an introduction to the nature, writing and use of social stories



*disa franklin*

# What is a social story?

A social story is a **short** story written in a **specific style and format**.

The story describes what happens in a specific social situation. It describes what is obvious to most of us, but not obvious to those with impaired social understanding.

**The social story describes what people do, why they do it, and what the common responses are.**

Social stories were developed by Carol Gray (1994) for use with children with ASD.

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## Social stories – the goal ...

Social stories are often used to develop appropriate behaviour.

**The goal is to teach social understanding, not rote compliance; to describe more than direct.**

# Social stories match the skills of children with ASD ...

- Visual
- Pictorial
- Permanent
- Adaptable: any child, anywhere
- Appropriate language
- Theory of mind
- Central coherence theory

## Social stories: history


- Carol Gray 1994
- Carole Rowe 1998
- Caroline Smith 2001

'[The technique] is proving remarkably effective in enabling the child to understand the cues and actions for specific situations' (Attwood, 1998, 33)

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# The purposes of social stories

- To provide positive feedback to a child so that they can recognise their own appropriate skills and behaviour
- To help prepare for a new experience
- To help a child accustom themselves to a situation, and to respond appropriately
- To help prevent extreme reactions that stem from a lack of social understanding
- To provide a prompt for socially appropriate behaviour

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# Features of social stories

- Written for an individual about a situation they find difficult
- Based on careful assessment
- Writing suited to match the language and vocabulary levels of the child
- Written in the first person and present or future tense
- One aspect or step per page

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# How do social stories help?

- Provide accurate information about real and relevant situations
- Present information visually
- Do not rely on interpersonal contact
- Provide a prompt about how to respond
- Provide reassurance
- Provide positive feedback

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## Structure of social stories

- Basic social stories use three kinds of sentences:
  - descriptive
  - perspective
  - directive
- Sentence ratio = 1 directive : 2–5 descriptive and/or perspective
- Content includes possibilities as well as probabilities

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## Basic social stories

- **Descriptive sentences** give accurate information about the setting. They provide, in words, the basic facts about what can be seen.
- **Perspective sentences** provide simple information about why things happen, letting the child into the heads and hearts of those featured in the story.
- **Directive sentences** prompt the child's appropriate behaviour.

## Presentation to student

- First time distraction-free
- Commonly presented black writing on white paper
- Sit slightly behind and to one side of student
- Read to the child
- Use frequently prior to time of difficulty
- Child shares story with a range of adults

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# Advanced social stories

Promote greater involvement of the child and adults through use of three other kinds of sentences:

**Control**

**Co-operative**

**Partial**

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## Advanced social stories

- **Control sentences** are statements suggested by the child to identify strategies that they may use to recall the information in the social story, and prompt their socially appropriate behaviour.
- **Co-operative sentences** identify what others will do to assist the child.
- **Partial sentences** encourage the child to make guesses regarding the next step in a situation – that is, the response of another individual to their actions.

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# Cans and can'ts of social stories

- They can't teach a new skill
- They can remind a child where to apply an existing skill

■ Co-operative sentences identify what others will do to assist the child

■ Partial sentences encourage the child to make guesses regarding the next step in a situation – that is, the response of another individual to their actions.

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## Finally...

- Questions make good titles and help focus the writer.

For example:

'Why is it important to answer the register?'

'What must I do when the fire bell goes?'

- Social stories are not 'bossy books' – the aim is to present information that will help the child understand the situation.

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## Activity

## 1

# Identifying descriptive, perspective, and directive sentences


You are writing a social story for a secondary school student about to take a school trip to a local library. It is planned that the librarian will show the children around.

Tick the best descriptive sentences:

- 1 I am going to the town library soon with my teacher.
- 2 The library is next door to the cinema and opposite Burger King.
- 3 We will walk along King's Road to the library.
- 4 The road will be busy with cars and lorries.
- 5 I will keep close to my teacher and my friends.
- 6 Everyone will walk quietly.
- 7 In the library the librarian will speak to us first.

Tick the best perspective sentences:

- 1 People will like it if we are quiet as we walk along.
- 2 Most people in the library expect children to be quiet.

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