

Adapting a Social Story for your child

Top tips for parents and carers

Tailor the story to your child

Social Stories are most effective when they are tailored to the individual child

- Think about what it is that your child needs help to understand and keep the story focussed on this. You can write or adapt a separate story if there are multiple issues .
- Consider using a special interest or favourite character in the story e.g. 'wrestlers eat vegetables to make them strong'.



Tailor the structure



- For younger children, or children who have difficulties with learning and /or attention, keep stories short and use short sentences.
- For older or more academically able children you can include more information in the story and use more complex sentences.

Tailor the language

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- Always keep language factual, clear and simple. This is especially important if your child takes information literally. Use words such as 'might/scheduled/sometimes' or 'most/many/lots of' to allow for flexibility.
- Use language and words that your child will understand.
- Explain words they might not understand e.g. 'interrupting means talking when someone is already speaking.'
- Use 1st person statements (e.g. 'I/we go to school to learn') for younger children or 3rd person statements (e.g. 'children/people go to school to learn') for older or demand avoidant children. Avoid using 2nd person statements (e.g. 'You go to school').



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Tailor the pictures

Pictures can help children to understand the information in a Social Story

- Ensure pictures are relevant and meaningful (they're not just to make the story look nice!)
- Ensure the pictures are safe (consider what your child will interpret from the picture)



Keep the story accurate but positive



- Ensure the story has a positive and patient tone.
- Avoid using words like should/shouldn't, must/mustn't, naughty/bad/inappropriate.
- Use 3rd person to share negative information in a positive way e.g. 'Many children find it hard to...'
- Let the child know who can help them e.g. 'mum will remind me to go to the toilet'.
- Let the child know what they *can* do, not just what is not allowed.

The first draft isn't the final draft!

- Read the story as if you were your child – does the story make sense and offer new information? Think about how your child will interpret the story if they are very literal.
- It can be helpful to write down all your ideas that you want to include first, then cut it down and edit afterwards.
- You may find that after sharing the story with your child, you need to make changes to the story to ensure it is 'hitting the mark' for your child e.g. explaining something more clearly or shortening the story.



Further information

Website of the founder of Social Stories, Carol Gray
www.carolgraysocialstories.com

Information about using Social Stories on the National Autistic Society website:
www.autism.org.uk/about/strategies/social-stories-comic-strips.aspx

