



# Social Stories for Autistic Children



Children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) can sometimes have difficulty when it comes to mastering social skills, as well as communication skills. The good news is there are various strategies or tools developed by experts to help people caring for children with ASD so they grow and succeed. Among these tools are the [social stories](#) specifically created for these kids.

## Brief background of social stories for kids with ASD

Social stories were conceptualized in 1991 by pediatric doctor and autism researcher, Dr. Carol Gray, with the intention to help enhance the social skills and behaviors of individuals with ASD. Social stories are used to model proper social interaction by giving a brief description of a situation using appropriate social cues, the perspectives of others, and a recommended appropriate response. The majority of these social stories for autistic individuals are used to educate and instruct on what to do in certain situations, as well as to acknowledge and praise them for a successful completion of a task.

Social stories are generally presented in a sentence format to break down a challenging social situation into steps that can be fully understood. These include the deletion of irrelevant information and the utilization of highly descriptive words, terms, or phrases that would allow people with autism to fully grasp the entirety of a specific situation. Among the social skills that can be learned by people on the spectrum through social stories are the identification of important cues in a particular situation, understanding another person's point of view, and following rules and routines.

## How to write effective social stories for kids with special needs

Social stories are generally written in a sentence format. There are seven basic sentences that are usually used in the construction of social stories for children with special needs. These are:

### 1. **Perspective sentences**

These sentences are general descriptions of the internal state of another person like his/her knowledge, thoughts, beliefs, feelings, motivations, and opinions, as well as his/her physical condition. An example of this type is "my brother likes to swim."

### 2. **Descriptive sentences**

These sentences generally answer the "why" questions in a social situation or event. They are factual and observable sentences that are free from assumptions and

opinions and are used to identify the most important factors in a social situation. An example is “children go to school to study.”

### 3. **Directive sentences**

These sentences suggest or present a response or choice of actions to a given situation or event in a positive way. One example is “I will brush my teeth after each meal.”

### 4. **Control sentences**

These are sentences written by a child with autism after reviewing his/her social story. These are used to identify or remember the personal strategies or solutions that the child will use to recall and use information. An example is “I need to brush my teeth after each meal to keep them healthy.”

### 5. **Affirmative sentences**

These sentences are used to support or reinforce the meaning of statements and may stress a shared value or opinion. These can be employed along with directive, perspective, or descriptive sentences. For example, “I will try to brush my teeth after each meal. It is very important to have healthy teeth.”

### 6. **Cooperative sentences**

These sentences teach a special child to realize or understand the important role played by other people in a certain situation or activity. An example is: “There are a lot of cars on the street. My dad and mom can assist me in crossing the street.”

### 7. **Partial sentences**

These are sentences used to encourage a kid with autism to make some guesswork on the right response on his/her part and on the part of other people to certain situations. These sentences are recommended when a child in the spectrum has already acquired sufficient understanding of specific situations or events, as well as the appropriate and expected actions or behaviors for each situation or event. An example is “My brother loves to \_\_\_\_\_.”

## **Some benefits of and reasons for creating social stories for autistic children**

Social stories are generally used to prepare children with autism on how to appropriately respond to specific situations or events that they could experience in their everyday life. Here are some benefits of or reasons for developing social stories for children with special needs:

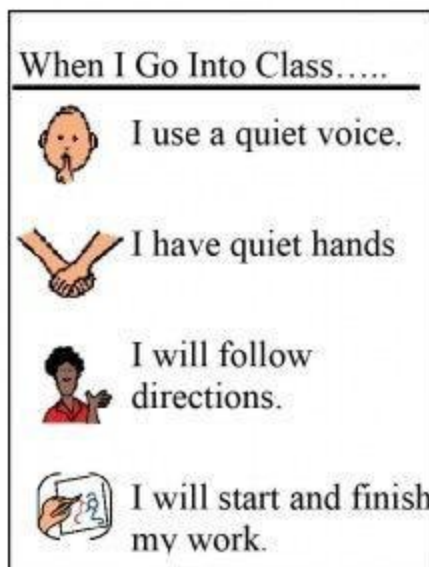
- Social stories help kids with ASD in learning self-care and social skills.
- They help children with special needs understand their own behavior and to know the reasons why a person behaves in a specific way.
- They assist autistic kids in understanding emotions such as anger, sadness, and happiness, as well as how to effectively address them.
- They help children on the spectrum to easily cope with various changes and transitions in their everyday life, as well as with distressing or stressful events that

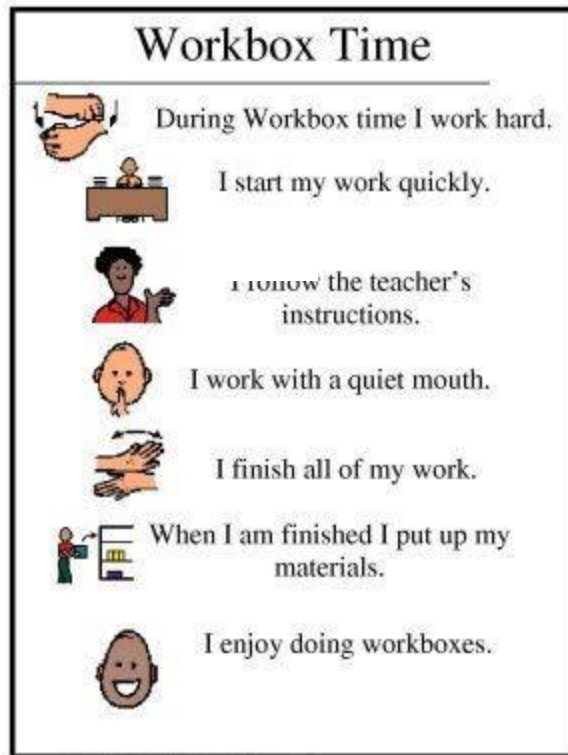


they may experience.

- Social stories can be used to encourage special children to improve their strengths, as well as to give a positive feedback to them for behaving properly or for following instructions.
- Social stories serve as a personalized and customized behavioral intervention tool to help children on the spectrum learn how to behave properly in certain situations.
- The stories reinforce proper or correct behavior in autistic children.
- Social stories are used to teach autistic kids on how to join in activities, use their imagination, and play with others.
- Social stories are useful tools in teaching kids with special needs on how to make and maintain friendships, as well as to join in group activities.

## Here are some visual examples of social stories for children with special needs:





## General tips for creating and telling social stories for autistic children

Here are some tips for parents and carers of kids with autism on how to effectively create social stories to deal with the specific needs of a child under their care:

### 1. Determine/decide on the topic of the social story

When writing a social story, the parents or carers should focus on one situation or topic at a time. This topic could be general, such as brushing one's teeth, washing one's hands, taking a bath, or a specific one like boarding an airplane and visiting the doctor for a medical check-up.

### 2. Based the features of the main character of the story on the features of the child

Try to create your story as a reflection of your autistic child and your family. You can achieve this by making the main character's physical features, gender, interest, and skills similar to your child. You can also include the family members in the story to teach your child their importance in his/her life.

### 3. Associate social stories with positive behaviors

You should always create your story in such a way that your special child can associate it with positive behaviors, as well as use it to fight negative emotions, and to accept new situations and activities positively. Make sure that the atmosphere, attitude, and tone of the characters in the story should be comforting, understanding, positive, and patient at all times.

**4. Make different stories for every specific need**

You should develop one story for each specific need of a child. Some examples of specific needs are how to communicate properly with peers and adults, how to develop friendships and relationships, and the proper things to do after waking up.

**5. Properly accounting for your child's mood when telling a social story**

When you are planning to tell a social story to your autistic child, you should consider his/her mood, as well as the time and place of your story-telling activity. Make sure that the child is fresh, relaxed, energetic, and free from anxiety symptoms during the activity.

**6. Tell or present a social story about a certain behavior before urging your child to display said behavior**

You should tell a social story about a particular behavior before the time you expect him/her to exhibit such behavior in a social event or situation. This will help your child to remember the story and base his/her action on the behavior of the character in the story.

**7. Ask your child to tell his/her own story**

Once in a while, you should ask your child to tell you his/her own story. This is an effective way to learn the things your child experiences every day or the things your child wants to do. You should be very sensitive to the stories your child tells you so that you can immediately identify and resolve any problem that he/she is experiencing.

**Conclusion:** Social stories can be an excellent tool to effectively teach kids with autism to handle many daily situations. It's important to remember to observe the behavior of a child with autism in order to increase the effectiveness of social stories. With practice, the use of social stories can help a child with autism fight negative emotions as well as accept new situations and activities positively.

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