



Special Needs Tip: Things to try at home based on strategies we use in school to help support your child's learning. We hope that these ideas might be helpful, but there is no obligation or expectation for you to use them.

Social Stories

What are social stories?

Social stories are short descriptions of particular situations, events or activities which include information about what to expect in that situation and why. They support children to understand how to behave in the situation. They are commonly used with children with ASD/ autism but are useful for a wide range of children. They are useful for any child who is struggling to understand social situations or change.

The social story approach was developed by an American teacher called Carol Gray. There is lots of guidance on social stories, including from [Freemantles Outreach](#) who come and support us in school and [NAS \(National Autism Society\)](#).

What to use social stories for?

Social stories can be used in many ways to help children including

- 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.

Writing a social story

- Think 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? If a particular outcome is not certain use words like 'usually' or 'sometimes' in your story.
- Your story should have a title, introduction, main section and conclusion.
- Use patient and 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.
 - Sometimes Mum gets sick

- During the Covid lockdown, Paul cannot go to school.
- Jane needs to eat food several times a day

And coaching sentences

- Susie will try and hold an adult's hand when she crosses the road.
- It is OK to ask an adult for help when...
- When Simon feels angry, he can take 3 deep breaths and go and jump on his trampoline.
- Add pictures to help your child understand the story and that it is about them. The younger your child, the more pictures they will need.

Here is an example of a social story I wrote for a child who didn't understand when to wear his coat



When to wear my coat

Sometimes it is cold in the morning and Steve needs his coat.
 Sometimes it gets warmer during the morning.
 Then people do not need to wear their coats at lunchtime play.
 If it is warm at lunchtime play, it is OK for Steve not to wear his coat.
 If it is warm and Steve doesn't wear his coat, he won't get too hot.
 If Steve is unsure if he needs his coat, he can ask an adult and they will help him.

(This is a picture of Steve's coat)

There are lots of examples of social stories on the internet that you can copy or adapt to suit your child.

How to use a social story

- You should read the story with you child when they are calm and away from the situation in question.
- It is good to 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.

Please contact me via salston@pirbright.surrey.sch.uk if you want help on writing a story on a particular issue.