



## Social Stories

Social stories can teach children the appropriate way to behave during certain social situations such as asking another child to play, telling news or sitting quietly during mat-time. Social stories may be used to deal with inappropriate behaviours by describing to the child a more appropriate way to act during certain situations. Stories may also be written before an unfamiliar event (E.g. starting kindy or participating in a sports carnival) to prepare the child for a change in their routine and to prevent the child from becoming frustrated or anxious.

### How to Write a Social Story

The following guidelines may be used when writing a social story:

- Observe situations which are difficult for the child to identify which specific behaviours you want to target in your story
- Keep language simple and present key words
- Use vocabulary that your child will understand
- Depending on the child's literacy abilities, you may need to supplement the text with pictures
- Generally social stories are written in present tense (E.g. "I wait for my turn"). They may also be written in future tense if you are preparing the child for a future event (E.g. birthday party. "I will give Sally her present").
- Avoid words like "always". Instead use "usually", "sometimes", "may", "can" & "probably" so that the child will be more flexible if the situation varies from your story.
- Try to avoid confusing language or sayings that could be interpreted literally (E.g. "pick up your feet")
- Personalize the social story so that it is meaningful to the child i.e. use people's names "Mrs White likes it when I do my work quietly".

## Types of Sentences:

When writing a social story there are generally 3 types of sentences that you can use, these are:

- Descriptive - tell the child the where, who, what and why of the situation (E.g. "At school children usually eat their lunch in the playground.")
- Directive - tell the child what the appropriate behaviour is. Directives often begin with "I can..." or "I will..." (E.g. "I will look at other people when I talk")
- Perspective - tell the child about other people's feelings and reactions. (E.g. "My teacher is happy when I wait for my turn.")

\*Try to use lots of descriptive & perspective sentences, and fewer directives. This will encourage the child to reflect on the situation, such as other people's reactions/feelings and consider for themselves what they should do. Remember to keep a balance though, as some directives will be useful so that the child will know what behaviour is expected of them.

## How to Implement a Social Story

There are a number of ways a social story can be implemented. Generally the following guidelines apply:

- The story is introduced by reading it through a few times with the individual. The individual then reads it once a day independently or with assistance if required.
- Once the individual successfully acquires the skills or appropriately responds in the social situation depicted, use of the story can be faded.
- This can be done by reducing the number of times the story is read each week, and then only reviewing the story once a month or as necessary (eg. if a problem arises in that situation again).
- Picture cues can also be used in conjunction with the story, particularly for individuals with comprehension difficulties. These can be placed in environments where the situation is likely to arise, to remind the individual of their social story.