

Social Stories

A Social Story is a frequently used strategy to teach social skills to children with disabilities. A Social Story is a non-coercive approach that presents social concepts and rules to children in the form of a brief story. This strategy could be used to teach a number of social and behavioral concepts, such as making transitions, playing a game, and going on a field trip. Carol Gray (1995; 2000) outlines a number of components that are essential to a successful Social Story, including: the story should be written in response to the child's personal need; the story should be something the child wants to read on her own (depending upon ability level); the story should be commensurate with ability and comprehension level; and the story should use less directive terms such "can," or "could," instead of "will" or "must." This last component is especially important for children who tend to be oppositional or defiant (i.e., the child who doesn't decide what to do until you tell him to do something...then he does the opposite!). The Social Story can be paired with pictures and placed on a computer to take advantage of the child's propensity towards visual instruction and interest in computers. I have found that children with ASD learn best when Social Stories are used in conjunction with Role-Playing and used as a social primer. That is, after reading a Social Story, the child then practices the skill introduced in the story. For instance, immediately after reading a story about joining-in an activity with peers, the child would practice the skill. Then, after reading the story and practicing the skill, the child would be exposed to a social situation where she would have an opportunity to perform the skill. For more comprehensive guidance on creating a Social Story, see Gray, 1995.