

## SOCIAL STORY TIPS AND SAMPLE

Social expectations or the proper way to respond when interacting with others are typically learned by example. People with communication difficulties and/or behavior problems sometimes need more explicit instructions. Social stories are meant to help children understand social situations, expectations, social cues, new activities, and/or social rules. As the name implies, they are brief descriptive stories that provide accurate information regarding a social situation. Knowing what to expect can help children with challenging behavior act appropriately in a social setting. Parents, teachers, and caregivers can use these simple stories as a tool to prepare the child for a new situation, to address problem behavior, or even to teach new skills in conjunction with reinforcing responses. The following is an example of a social story explaining when it's appropriate to run.

### Running

I like to run. It is fun to go fast.  
It's okay to run when I am playing outside.  
I can run when I am on the playground.  
Sometimes I feel like running, but it is dangerous to run when I am inside.  
Running inside could hurt me or other people.  
When people are inside, they walk.  
Walking inside is safe.  
I will try to walk inside and only run when I am outside on the playground.  
My teachers and parents like it when I remember to walk inside.

### Writing a Social Story

*Begin by observing the child in the situation you are addressing. Try to take on the child's perspective and include aspects of his or her feelings or views in the story. Also, include usual occurrences in the social situation and the perspective of others along with considering possible variations.*

There are three types of sentences used in writing social stories:

1. Descriptive sentences: objectively define anticipated events where a situation occurs, who is involved, what they are doing, and why. (e.g., When people are inside, they walk.)
2. Perspective sentences: describe the internal status of the person or persons involved, their thoughts, feelings, or moods. (e.g., Running inside could hurt me or other people.)
3. Directive sentences: are individualized statements of desired responses stated in a positive manner. They may begin "I can try..." or "I will work on..." Try to avoid

sentences starting with "do not" or definitive statements. (e.g., I will try to walk in inside.)

A social story should have 3 to 5 descriptive and perspective sentences for each directive sentence. Avoid using too many directive sentences. They will be lost without adequate contextualization.

Write in first person and on the child's developmental skill level. Also remember to use pictures that fit within the child's developmental skill level to supplement text.

Reference:

Broek, E., Cain, S.L., Dutkiewicz, M., Fleck, L., Grey, B., Grey, C., et al. (1994). *The Original Social Story Book*. Arlington, TX: Future Education. [www.thegraycenter.org](http://www.thegraycenter.org)

[http://challengingbehavior.fmhi.usf.edu/explore/pbs\\_docs/social\\_story\\_tips.pdf](http://challengingbehavior.fmhi.usf.edu/explore/pbs_docs/social_story_tips.pdf)