

Foreword

What can be said in a foreword for a new revision of *Social Stories™*, an update of a classic already enshrined in the annals of autism history? I've been focused on supporting people with autism and developmental challenges for more than four decades, so I'm going to take advantage of my seniority and reflect on my experiences and the impact of *Social Stories™* over many years.

Let's start with Carol, one of the most thoughtful, creative, and insightful educators to walk the earth (no exaggeration!!). I have had the privilege of presenting with Carol and hosting her as a conference speaker on numerous occasions. I am always in awe of her intuitive sense of how people with ASD experience the world that allows for a deep understanding of the types of knowledge and support that will be the most beneficial for them. *Social Stories™* are but one of Carol's incredible innovations that have reshaped autism education and therapy; most importantly, it all happens on a foundation of the deepest love and respect she has for people she and others support. She values them as fellow humans sharing life together, an approach often sadly missing from educational and treatment efforts.

Social Stories™ are, hands down, the most widely used "focused intervention strategy" I have observed over my many years in autism research and consulting, and in programs with differing philosophies and approaches (e.g., behavioral as well as developmental). *Social Stories™* are used by parents, siblings, professionals and para-educators of all shapes and sizes in school, home and community settings. If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, the cup runneth over for *Social Stories™*. *Social Stories™* have been copied, modified, and sometimes re-configured to such an extent that one must carefully scrutinize whether what one claims to be a *Social Story™* actually meets Carol's specifically delineated specifications for structure and implementation. One of the most flagrant violations is when *Social Stories™* are used primarily to correct behavior rather than enhance social understanding. Carol is so clear about this issue because she cares so much about the developing self-esteem of a person with developmental challenges. Of course, individualized support with a focus on building social understanding is a hallmark of *Social Stories™*.

Some practitioners think of Social Stories™ as simple. To the contrary, they are a strategy that is incredibly elegant when precisely formulated according to Carol's criteria. Social Stories™ have proven to be effective in educational practice and validated in research as an essential support for persons with developmental challenges and differences of all ages and a wide range of developmental abilities. In fact, in this latest revision, Carol has added two chapters of Stories for preschoolers (an entire one devoted to using the toilet), as well as expanding each chapter and adding a collection of Social Articles for adults.

Yes, Social Stories™ may be described as an effective and meaningful approach to support social understanding, but the ultimate and deeper goal is to empower children and older people by enhancing their understanding of social situations and social encounters in their lives, and thereby supporting their ability to be active participants in life's routines and activities. The effective use of Social Stories™ goes even further—it allows practitioners and parents to build trusting relationships through their support. Ultimately, the overarching goal of Social Stories™ is this: to help people to be self-determined, confident and competent individuals.

So now, dig in, enjoy and show the people you are teaching and supporting how much you love and care about them through your use of Social Stories™. Your efforts will help them thrive and live happily in this crazy world of ours.

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Introduction to the Social Story™ 10.2 Tutorials

Welcome to the Social Story™ 10.2 Tutorials, your introductory guide to developing Social Stories™ according to the current 10.2 criteria. This chapter will help you learn the basics of the approach so that you can begin to write Social Stories™ for those in your care. As you know, I wrote the Stories in this book for students with autism. I also wrote the Stories with you in mind as well, to introduce you to the art of writing Social Stories™. I will be referring to them frequently as you read and complete each tutorial.

As defined in the introduction to this book, A Social Story™ accurately describes a context, skill, achievement, or concept according to 10 defining criteria. These criteria guide Story research, development, and implementation to ensure an overall patient and supportive quality, and a format, “voice”, content, and learning experience that is descriptive, meaningful, and physically, socially, and emotionally safe for the child, adolescent, or adult with autism. The criteria define what a Social Story™ is, and the process that researches, writes, and illustrates it.

In this chapter, the criteria are discussed in a series of ten tutorials. Work through them in sequence. Each tutorial opens with a brief definition of the criterion in italics, followed by a short discussion, activity and answers, and final notes. Answers are discussed in the text immediately following each activity. For this reason, complete each activity before reading further. It's also important to read the closing notes of each tutorial. They are not always a simple summary. As titled, they are final notes. They may contain information not previously mentioned, or suggest an additional exercise. Finally, it is not necessary to complete all of the tutorials in one session. In fact, it may be preferable to spread them out a bit, perhaps completing one each evening.

The 10.2 criteria are titled to make them easy to memorize. This makes it possible for Authors to develop a Social Story™ without having to run for this book each time.

The 10.2 criteria are:

1. One Goal
2. Two-Part Discovery
3. Three Parts and a Title
4. FOURmat Makes It Mine
5. Five Factors Impact Voice and Vocabulary
6. Six Questions Guide Story Development
7. Seven Is About Sentences
8. A Gr-eight Formula
9. Nine to Refine
10. Ten Guides to Implementation

After completing each tutorial, try to list the titles of the criteria that you have completed from memory. By the time you finish this chapter I am confident that you will have them memorized!

In this chapter, the 10 criteria are discussed in a series of tutorials. Work through them in sequence. Each tutorial opens with a brief definition of the criterion in *italics*, followed by a short discussion, activity and answers, and final notes. Answers are discussed in the text immediately following each activity. For this reason, complete each activity before reading further. It's also important to read the closing notes of each tutorial. They are not always a simple summary; as titled they are final notes and their content varies. For example, the final notes of a tutorial may contain information not previously mentioned, or direct you to complete an additional activity. Finally, it is not necessary to complete all the tutorials in one session. In fact, it may be preferable to spread them out a bit, perhaps completing one each evening.

Relax and have fun as you learn to develop Social Stories according to the 10.2 criteria!

SOCIAL STORY™ VOCABULARY

First, it's important to establish some basic Social Story™ vocabulary. This vocabulary is designed to save us time so that Authors (that's you!) can efficiently focus on the task at hand:

- **Author:** The Author is you, the person who researches and develops a Social Story™. The Author may also be someone else, or a team of parents and professionals. Authors adhere to ten criteria that define each Social Story™ and the process that creates it. Due to their specialized skills, *Author* is always capitalized.
- **Audience:** The Author writes for a specific Audience. This is often a child, adolescent, or adult with autism. Each Social Story™ is developed with consideration of several individual factors, including but not limited to the age, gender, abilities, personality, preferences, and/or interests of the Audience. *Audience* is always capitalized when it is used in reference to Social Stories™.
- **Social Stories™:** The definition of Social Stories™ appears in the second paragraph of this introduction. Any time the term *Social Story™* is capitalized, it refers to a Social Story™ that meets all of the current 10.1 criteria. This distinguishes Social Stories™ from "social stories" (lower case) that may not meet the criteria. When the term is used in these tutorials, it refers to Social Stories™ and Social Articles™. Social Articles are the more advanced counterpart of Social Stories™. They are often written for students who are older or academically more advanced. Social Articles adhere to the same criteria as Social Stories.
- **Story:** Any time the word *Story* is capitalized, I am referring to a Social Story™ that meets all the current criteria. This distinguishes Stories from stories (lower case) that may not meet the 10.2 criteria.
- **Team:** The Team includes parents and professionals, all those working together on behalf of an individual with ASD. Due to the specialized nature of this group, and the unique issues that they encounter and address, *Team* is always capitalized.

ACTIVITY

It is likely that you've already had some experiences with Social Stories™. Maybe you have read one, written one, heard about one, seen one, or been in a room with one. I've developed a short exercise for you. Is this a Social Story™? Complete the activity first and then continue reading.

Introduction Activity: Is This a Social Story™?

Directions: Read the Story below. Is It a Social Story™? Yes No

Many people write Social Stories™. You may want to learn how to write Social Stories™, too. Then you will be able to write Stories for the students in your classroom. You'll have fun at the same time!

You may use the tutorials in this chapter to learn about the ten criteria that distinguish Social Stories™ from other visual strategies. Work through each tutorial at your own pace. Have fun!

Answer: This is not a Social Story™. It contains errors that deviate from the ten criteria. Here are three of them:

- Every Social Story™ has a title that represents the topic. In addition, Social Stories™ use sound story construction, using an introduction, body, and conclusion. This story does not have a title, and the delineation of an introduction, body, and conclusion is unclear.
- Social Stories™ contain only first and/or third person statements. Second person statements never appear in a Social Story. This story contains several second person statements.

- Social Stories™ are accurate and unassuming. Thus a phrase like, “You’ll have fun at the same time,” would not appear in a Social Story™. The phrase assumes the experience of the Audience; it is a guess that may or may not be true.

These are common errors. In my work, I have reviewed several stories that people refer to as “Social Stories™” that deviate from—or ignore altogether—many of the criteria. The term Social Stories™ is often used carelessly to refer to anything placed in writing for a person on the autism spectrum. As a result, there is a lot of misinformation that ultimately threatens the quality and safety of this important instructional tool.

To get a “feel” for this approach, randomly select a few Stories in this book. As you read them, note the title, introduction, body, and conclusion; the omission of second person statements, and the overall patient quality of each. The Stories in this book have additional characteristics in common as well. We’ll be discussing each of their shared characteristics in the following ten tutorials.

FINAL NOTES

I want to personally thank you for taking the time to learn more about Social Stories™. You are also helping to preserve the integrity and quality of this approach worldwide. I sincerely appreciate your efforts. In return, I will do my best to support you as you work to learn the art of researching and writing Social Stories™.