Social Story™ Definition

A Social Story™/Social Article accurately describes a situation, skill, or concept according to 10 defining criteria. These criteria guide Story/Article development to ensure an overall patient and supportive quality, and a format, “voice”, and relevant content that is descriptive, meaningful, and physically, socially, and emotionally safe for the Audience.

#1 Social Story™ Goal

The goal of a Social Story™/Social Article is to share accurate information using format, “voice”, and relevant content that is descriptive, meaningful, and physically, socially, and emotionally safe for the Audience. Every Social Story has an overall patient and reassuring quality.

#2 Two-Step Discovery

Keeping the goal in mind, Authors/Educators gather relevant information to 1) improve their understanding of the Audience in relation to a situation, skill, or concept and/or 2) identify the specific topic(s) and type(s) of information to share in the Story.

#3 Three-Parts & a Title

A Social Story™/Article has a title and introduction that clearly identifies the topic, a body that adds detail, and a conclusion that reinforces and summarizes the information.

#4 Four·mat!

A Social Story™/Article has a format that clarifies content and enhances meaning for the Audience.
Places to Sit and Eat at McDonalds®

Sometimes my family eats at McDonalds.
We may sit at a table that looks like this.
We may eat at a table that looks like this.
Or, we may eat at another kind of table. This is okay.

(Or, to add more detail: If someone is already sitting there, we will try to look for another table.)

Waiting to Fly (Easy Edit)

My name is Pete. I am going to ride in an airplane. I will probably have to wait.

People often have to wait at check-in. Many people may need to check their luggage or get boarding passes.

People often wait in the boarding area. They wait for the pilot and crew to get the plane ready to fly.

People often need to wait for the plane to go. They need to wait for the crew to make sure everything is ready for the flight.

People often need to wait for other reasons, too. Waiting happens a lot when people fly in airplanes.

I am going to fly in an airplane soon. I may have to wait often.

#5 Five Factors Define Voice & Vocabulary

A Social Story™ has a patient and supportive “voice” and vocabulary that is defined by five factors:

1) Exclusive use of first- and/or third-person perspective statements (no second person statements);
2) Positive and patient tone;
3) Past, present, or future tense;
4) Literally accurate; and
5) Accurate meaning.
A Social Story™ written in the first-person, using past, present, and future tense:

I learned how to button. I learned how to zip.

I am learning how to tie my shoes.

Someday, I will be able to tie my shoes.

The Washing Machine Story

Sometimes we wash clothes.

Mom knows when to wash clothes. The washing machine is on when we wash clothes.

Sometimes we do not need to wash clothes. The washing machine is off. This is okay.

#6 Six Questions

A Social Story™ answers relevant “wh’ questions”, describing the context (WHERE), time-related information (WHEN), relevant people (WHO), important cues (WHAT), basic activities, behaviors, or statements (HOW) and the reasons or rationale behind them (WHY).

When do people do to bed?

 Usually, children need to sleep longer than moms and dads. That is why I may go to bed before my mom or dad. My bedtime is at about ____________________.

 My mom usually goes to bed at about _______________. My dad usually goes to bed at about _________________.

 It is okay for me to sleep when mom and dad are awake. They will go to bed soon. They have a bedtime, too.


#7 Seven Sentence Types

A Social Story™ is comprised of Descriptive Sentences (objective, often observable, statements of fact), with an option of any one or more of the following sentence types: Perspective Sentences (that describe
the thoughts, feelings, and/or beliefs of other people); Three Sentences that Coach (to identify suggested responses for the individual and/or his or her team – parents, professionals, and peers); Affirmative Sentences (that enhance the meaning of surrounding statements); and Partial Sentences.

Why Do People Wrap Gifts?

Many people wrap gifts.

Wrapping hides a gift. Later, when the gift is opened, it’s a surprise. Many people think that nice surprises are fun.

A wrapped gift is pretty, too. There is colorful paper, and maybe a bow or a card. Wrapping is a beautiful way to hide a nice surprise.

Wrapping a gift hides a nice surprise, and makes it pretty and festive.

#8 A Gr-eight! Formula

*The Social Story™ Formula

One formula and Seven Sentence Types ensures that every Social Story™ describes more than directs:

\[ \text{Descriptive} + \text{Perspective} + \text{Affirmative Sentences} = \text{DESCRIBE} \]

\[ \frac{\text{Sentences that Coach}}{\text{COACH}} \geq 2 \]

*If there are no (0) Sentences that Coach, use 1 in the denominator.

#9 Nine Makes it Mine

A Social Story™ is tailored to the individual abilities, attention span, learning style (see also Criteria 4), and whenever possible – interests – of the Audience.
#10 Ten Guides to Editing and Implementation

The Ten Guides to Editing and Implementation ensure that the Goal that guides Story/Article development is also evident in its editing and use. They are:

1) Edit
2) Plan for Comprehension
3) Plan Story Support
4) Plan Story Review
5) Plan a Positive Introduction
6) Monitor
7) Organize the Stories
8) Mix & Match to Build Concepts
9) Story Re-Runs & Sequels to Tie Past, Present, & Future
10) Recycle Instruction into Applause

REFERENCES


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