

## Social Stories™

Other common name: social scripts

### At a glance: Social Stories™

Type of therapy	Therapy-based
The claim	Improves social characteristics of autism
Suitable for	People with ASD
Research rating Find out more about this rating system in our <a href="#">FAQs</a> .	 <p><b>Established</b> Research shows positive effects.</p>
Time Estimate of the total time for family in hours per week and duration.	 <p>This therapy initially involves daily use. Gradually, the daily time commitment decreases as behaviours are learned. Because it is a preventative approach, the emphasis is on the timing of the intervention rather than its duration.</p>
Cost Estimate of cost to family per session/item or week.	



Visit the [Autism Service Pathfinder](#) to browse Service Providers information.

### About this intervention

#### What is it?

Social Stories™ is a highly structured intervention that uses stories to explain social situations to children with autism. They also help children learn socially appropriate behaviours and responses.

#### Who is it for?

Social Stories™ were initially developed for use with children with autism. They are now also being used to help other children with learning and intellectual disorders.

Social Stories™ may be less effective for children with poor comprehension skills. For this reason, the language used in each story should match the age and skills of the child.

What is it used for?

Social Stories™ are used to teach children with autism about appropriate social behaviours in specific settings, such as the supermarket, the doctor's surgery, the playground and so on. A story can be created for almost any social situation.

Where does it come from?

Social Stories™ were developed in 1991 by Carol Gray, a teacher working with young children with autism.

What is the idea behind it?

Individuals with autism often misunderstand or don't pick up on social cues such as body language, facial expressions, gestures and eye contact. Social Stories™ were developed as a way for children to learn how they should behave in social settings by explicitly pointing out details about the setting and what typically happens in that setting. These details help children pick up on cues they would normally overlook. Social Stories™ aim to increase social understanding by answering the 'who', 'what', 'where', 'how', and 'why' questions.

At first, this therapy doesn't require the child to socially interact (and practise what they learn). This means that Social Stories™ can be less threatening and anxiety-provoking for children with autism than some other interventions.

What does it involve?

First, a [psychologist](#) or [speech pathologist](#) performs a thorough assessment of the child to identify key areas of concern, and details about when and where problem behaviour usually occurs.

The therapist then writes a story based on a particular area or situation of concern. The tailor-made story is written in the first or third person and can be written in past, present, or future tense ('I go to the shop', 'We sit in the waiting room'). The story is usually presented in a book format to match the child's vocabulary and comprehension skills. Photos or illustrations can be used if they enhance the story. Sometimes Social Stories™ can be presented in the format of a rhyme, or the words can be put to music.

Once completed, an adult reads the story with the child at least twice, to ensure the child is able to understand the story.

Parents and teachers help the child apply the lesson by reminding the child of the story's key points, if necessary. For example, 'What does the story tell us to do?'

Once the child understands the social situation, or learns the social behaviour and performs it without prompting from adults, the story can be read less often and gradually phased out.

The stories developed can be delivered in different ways, depending on the child's capabilities. For example, if the child has difficulty reading, the story can be recorded and played as the child reads along. If the child is unable to read, the story might be video-recorded with scenes acted out (this is called a Storymovie™).

Cost considerations

Anybody who is trained can write these stories, so the cost can be quite low. You'll need to attend training sessions or buy the training material to learn the program, such as the Social Stories™ manual *The New Social Story Book – 10th Anniversary Edition (2010)* by Carol Gray. You may also want to buy

other resources to help you develop stories. The cost of these will vary. Your state autism association may also have these materials for you to use or borrow free of charge.

The costs of therapies such as Social Stories™ may be covered for up to 20 sessions by Medicare. Whether the cost is covered will depend on the professional providing the consultation, and you'll need a referral from your GP.

Some private health care funds might cover a portion of the consultation fee. This can be claimed immediately if the provider has [HICAPS](#).

Does it work?

Quality research shows that this approach has positive effects on the behaviour of children with autism.

Who practises this method?

Anyone trained in the program can develop Social Stories™. Some professionals may also be able to train parents in constructing stories for their child, and advise them on the best way to deliver the story – for example, by reading it aloud, making a video, or having the child reading it silently.

Parent education, training, support and involvement

Parents are often directly involved in delivering the intervention by reading the story to their child. Parents might also need to remind the child to use these new skills in social situations, and are responsible for rewarding their child for putting the new skills into practice. With training, parents can also create their own stories.

Where can I find a practitioner?

Contact the [autism association in your state or territory](#) and ask them to recommend a service or practitioner.

Alternatively, some psychologists and speech pathologists who work with children have experience using Social Stories™. You can find psychologists on the [Australian Psychology Society search page](#) and speech pathologists at the [Speech Pathology Australia website](#).

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Rated  (3 ratings)

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#### More to explore

- ▶ Testing interventions for autism spectrum disorder
- ▶ Therapy hours: how many are enough for autism spectrum disorder?

#### Web links

- ▶ ICAN - Social Stories
- ▶ The Gray Center for Social Learning and Understanding – What are Social Stories?
- ▶ Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing – Helping Children with Autism

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