



Is the story in your hand a Social Story? Ask Carol Gray.

## It's NOT a Social Story if... A screening instrument

*It's Not a Social Story if...* is designed for any parent, caregiver, or professional who works on behalf of children, adolescents, or adults with autism. It is a 25-question screening instrument that identifies stories that do not meet the current Social Story definition and 10.2 Criteria. Just one 'no' response in the first section (questions 1-16) or one 'yes' response in the second (questions 17-25), and a story is not a Social Story. While this instrument may convince you to discard a story, it may also be helpful in reviewing a story draft to identify problems and make improvements.

*Please Note:* This informal screening instrument does not screen for all required Social Story elements. For this reason, it is feasible to have all 'yes' responses in the first section, and all 'no' responses in the second section, and still have a story that is *not* a Social Story. In addition, this instrument cannot definitively tell you if a story *is* a Social Story. More information would be required to make that determination.

Directions: Select a story for screening. Answer 'yes' or 'no' to the following. To clarify some terminology: The 'Audience' is a child, adolescent, or adult with autism; the person who reads the Story. You will notice a number in parentheses following each item, like this: (3); this is the number of the related Social Story Criterion.

A 'no' response to any question 1-16, it is not a Social Story.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Were the parents/caregivers contacted as part of gathering information for the story, and prior to its introduction to the Audience? (1, 2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Was the information for the Story gathered from a variety of applicable sources prior to identifying a specific story topic? (Examples of information sources include but are not limited to observations; consults with team members and if possible the person with autism; Internet; task analysis.) (1, 2)implied
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. At least 50% of all Stories praise the Audience for achievements, talents, kind gestures, participation in helpful activities, etc. You have a story for a specific Audience. Do 50% or more of his/her stories systematically meet this requirement? (1, 2)

For item 4, answer only one, either 4a or 4b, according to the story topic.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 4a. If this is a story that shares information about a challenging situation, skill, or concept, was consideration given to the perception/vantage point of the Audience, in an effort to identify information that the story Audience may be missing or misunderstanding, or interpreting differently than others? (1, 2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4b. If this is a story that praises the Audience, was consideration given to to his/her perception/perspective/interpretation to add affirming detail that the Audience may have missed? (As an example, if the story is about losing a baseball game, does the Audience understand that *everyone is so proud* because he/she worked hard, played fair, and handled the 6-5 score with genuine sportsmanship?) (1, 2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Did the author consider all relevant 'wh' questions (who, what, when, where, why, and how) and use them as guides to the Story content? (1, 6)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Social Stories have a solid story construction. Does this story have an introduction that presents the topic, a body that adds detail, and a conclusion? In other words, do you see three paragraphs? (A paragraph may be one sentence long) (1, 3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Does the story have a title that represents the story content well? (1, 3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Is the story within the attention span of the Audience? (1, 4)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Is the story within the ability of the Audience? (1, 4)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Was consideration given to incorporating Audience talent(s) or interest(s) into the story, and if determined to be beneficial, was it done? (1, 4)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Was *consideration* given to including story elements to support generalization across settings and time? (1, 4)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Was *consideration* given to tying related past, present, and future information into the story? (This supports concept formation and generalization) (1, 5)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Is the story likely to be meaningful for the Audience? (1, 4)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Does the story have a patient, reassuring, and respectful tone throughout? (1, 5)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Will the review of the story be tailored to the abilities of the Audience? (1, 10)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. Will the story consistently be reviewed in a comfortable and positive context, and never as a consequence for misbehavior?

A 'yes' response to any question 18-25, it is not a Social Story.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. Is there anything in the story text, illustration, or plan for implementation that could threaten the social, emotional, or physical safety of the Audience? (1, 4, 5, 8, 10)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 18. Does this story contain (or imply) any unreliable or inaccurate information that is a faulty rationale, poor judgment, unwise decision or course of action, unsafe, ineffective, or 'a bad idea'? (1, 2, 5)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 19. Are there any second person statements? (Examples: *You may like going out to recess* (playtime) or *You've nothing to worry about.*) (1, 5)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 20. Are there any personalized descriptions of a negative Audience responses or behavior? (Examples: *Jaime (our Audience) hit Christopher yesterday*, or *I often miss the directions to assignments*, or *I'd have more friends if I'd just stop pointing out their flaws.*) (1, 5)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 21. Is there anything about the text or illustration that may insult or diminish the self-esteem of the Audience, either via direct statement or illustration, and/or implication? (4, 5, 8)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 22. Does the story contain *any* judgmental vocabulary or overall tone? (Examples of forbidden Social Story vocabulary (there are more): *should*, *shouldn't*, *must*, *mustn't*, *ought*, *ought to*, *bad*, *naughty*, *inappropriate*, etc.) (1, 5)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 23. Is the story accurate from the perspective of its Audience? (Literal accuracy is required in a Social Story *unless* the Author is sure that the Audience will readily understand an implied meaning, metaphor, or analogy in the story.)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 24. Is there any vocabulary that could cause Audience anxiety where another word might be used in its place?
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 25. Is the Story intended to replace supervision? (Example: A Social Story about crossing a street safely. Social Stories never replace supervision). (1, 2, 6)
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If you are familiar with the Social Story Formula, and the importance of the number in the quotient (referred to as the Story Rating in the current Social Stories 10.2 Criteria), use the formula to determine your Story Rating. If the number is less than 2 it is not a Social Story.