ANSWERS

THE SOCIAL STORY™ QUIZ

Note: To clarify two Social Story terms in this discussion of the Social Story Quiz answers: The 'Author' is the person who develops the Social Story. Each Author writes for an Audience, often a specific child, adolescent, or adult with autism or social communication challenge or difference.

Question 1: Social Story Excerpts

In a Social Story, which of the following excerpts (a, b, c, d, e) would never be used with this photo (left)?

Answer: 'a' and 'd'. Explanation below.

Regarding the 'never' examples, sentences 'a' and 'd':
a. *This is a nice photo.*
d. *The children in this photo are at recess (playtime). They are smiling! That's because recess is fun!*

Social Stories are accurate and free of assumptions, with respect for the perspective of the Audience. Although many people may agree that the above photo is nice (a), it may not look nice to *everyone*. In the same way, everyone may not think that recess is fun, as stated in sentence 'd'. A Social Story never presents opinion –however popular it may be– as fact. An opinion may be included in a Social Story, as long as there is information about whose opinion it is. For example, it is OK in a Social Story to use: *Mandy thinks this is a nice photo.* The sentence from 'c' below is also OK: *Many parents like photos of smiling children.*

Regarding excerpts that are OK in a Social Story, sentences in 'b', 'c', and 'e':
b. *This is a photo of children smiling*
c. *Many parents like photos of smiling children*
e. *Sometimes, when children are in a line they may move around a little, talk with one another, or laugh. This often happens when children begin to make a line to go inside after recess.*

Literal accuracy is a part of the 5th Social Story Criterion, one of five factors that determine the "voice" and vocabulary of every Social Story. In a Social Story, information is presented accurately; in almost all cases, text and illustration is *literally* accurate. This helps to ensure that the information "makes sense" to a child, adolescent, or adult who may be prone to interpret information at face value, without the benefit of intended or commonly understood social meanings. It builds trust between the Author and the Audience. For this reason (and of course, others) excerpts 'b', 'c', and 'e' are OK to use in a Social Story.

Take another look at excerpt 'e': *Sometimes, when children are in a line they may move around a little, talk with one another, or laugh. This often happens when children begin to make a line to go inside after recess.* It shares important detail, in this case, contextual information, i.e. *why, where* and *when* children in a line may move around. This is another way to build accurate meaning into a Story, and minimize the risk of an alternate or misinterpretation.

Question 2: Following Directions

Which, if any, of these excerpts would never appear in a Social Story?

a. I am learning about directions at school.

b. A student may want to do something else. That student may not follow the directions. Instead, that student will do what he or she wants to do. I do that a lot..

c. Sometimes, teachers, or other school staff, tell students what to do. They give students directions.

d. You should try to listen and follow directions.

Answer: 'b', 'd'. Explanation below.

a. *I am learning about directions at school.*

Nice! No problems here! The phrase, *I am learning….* is positive and emotionally safe for the Audience, and often appears in a Social Story.

b. *A student may want to do something else. That student may not follow the directions. Instead, that student will do what he or she wants to do. I do that a lot.*

A Social Story must be physically, socially, and emotionally safe for the Audience. This excerpt is written in the first person voice of the Audience. Self-depreciating statements, descriptions of negative or undesirable behaviors or characteristics in the Audience, never appear in a Social Story. Negative topics and behaviors are often addressed, but always in the third-person voice. To translate this excerpt for use in a Social Story, we may write, *Sometimes, a student may want to do something else. That student may not follow directions. This is a mistake. Following directions helps the teacher and students work, learn, and play together.*

c. *Sometimes, teachers, or other school staff, tell students what to do. They give students directions.*

This excerpt has some important Social Story elements. It defines what is meant by *directions* without being insulting to the Audience. Also, the most accurate verb has been selected; 'tell' in this story is far more accurate than 'ask'. This Story is about directions, and there is no choice in a directive.

d. *You should try to listen and follow directions.*

There are big mistakes here. The statement is written in the second person voice. Second person statements never appear in a Social Story, because they are most likely to harbor assumptions or have a judgmental tone. Social Stories never contain the word 'should' (it's on the list of forbidden vocabulary), or any word or phrase that has any sort of assumptive or judgmental meaning or tone. Second person statements are most likely to be emotionally unsafe for the Audience. Safety is of primary importance, and reigns over every aspect of Story development.

Question 3: Social Stories TRUE and FALSE

True (T) or False (F)? Answer: 'd' is TRUE, all others are FALSE. Explanation below.

a. FALSE *The goal of a Social Story is to improve the behavior of a child, adolescent, or adult with autism.*

b. FALSE *Social Stories are a behavioral strategy.*

c. FALSE *Every Social Story has Descriptive Sentences and Coaching Sentences.*

d. TRUE   *If parents or caregivers are not involved in the development of a Social Story, it's not a Social Story.*

e. FALSE *"Social Story Script" is a term often used in Social Story seminars and workshops.*

f. FALSE *The first step in writing a Social Story is to decide on a topic.*

a. FALSE. The goal of a Social Story will never be to get the Audience to do what we want him or her to do. This is the Social Story goal statement: *The goal of a Social Story is to share accurate information using a content, format, and voice that is descriptive, meaningful, and physically, socially, and emotionally safe for the intended Audience.* Admittedly, it may be an Audience response that causes us to think, "Hmmmmm….maybe we should write a Social Story…". If our focus, though, is on changing Audience behavior we are at risk of missing the point of this approach. Instead, Authors look for information that the Audience may be missing, information that may elicit the Audience's own more effective responses. Actually, Social Stories are focused on behavior of one group, but it is not the Audience. It is the behavior of the Authors… it is the Authors who are sharing information, and the goal structures the efforts of Authors to develop a sound, safe, and meaningful Story.

b. FALSE. Social Stories are a social cognitive strategy, based on the premise that sharing accurate information in a patient and positive format supports the Audience, who in turn develops more effective responses *or* gains a better understanding of why certain responses are expected. A Social Story may describe a desired response to a given situation, though not without respectfully sharing the supporting rationale, however obvious it may seem to the Author. (In Social Story terms, the word 'response' is preferred and used far more frequently than 'behavior'.)

c. FALSE. Coaching Sentences are optional in a Social Story. Descriptive Sentences are the required heart of every Social Story.

d. TRUE. A huge part of gathering information is consultation with a child's team prior to Story development, and again prior to implementation. Professionals are often a part of that team. Parents or caregivers are ALWAYS a part of the team (or the adult person with autism if he or she is no longer with caregivers). Learning how to gather information is a big part of every Social Story workshop.

e. FALSE. Sometimes you may see the term Social Story Script. It is not a term used by those trained in the use of Social Stories. A Social Story would never contain any sort of prescribed script, as in a list of what exactly to do, or say.

f. FALSE. The first step is to gather information, without assumption or any preconceived idea as to what may be discovered. Gathering information with an open and objective mind helps authors to 'note the obvious' and discover a specific – and sometimes unique – Social Story topic. In some cases, a logical solution is discovered, one likely to be far more immediately helpful than a Social Story.
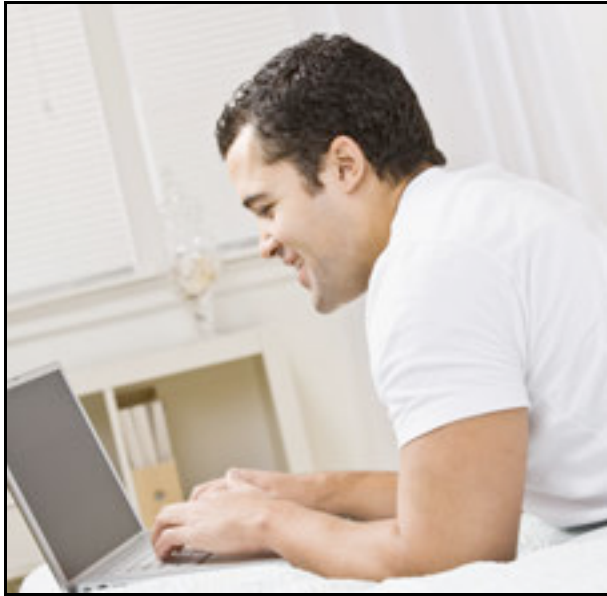
Question 4: Step-by-Step

Authors of Social Stories follow a defined process to develop each Social Story. Beginning with "1" for the first step, identify the sequence that is followed with the five steps listed below.

2. Identify the topic.

1. Gather information

3. Develop the Story

5. Introduce the Story

4. Review and revise

Answer as indicated above, explanation below.

1. Gather information: One of the most frequent Author errors is to shortcut, minimize, or completely skip the important process of gathering information. Social Stories are defined by the characteristics of the Story *and* the process that is followed to create it. Gathering information is critical to every Social Story. One of the best descriptions of this step is included in the book, *Revealing the Hidden Social Code,* by Marie Howley and Eileen Arnold (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2005). Even though the Social Story Soci have been revised since the book was published, it provides a great reader-friendly way to learn to write a Social Story. All you would have to do, then, is review the current Social Stories 10.2 Criteria to see where the revisions and updates have occurred.

2. Identify the topic: Experience suggests that the Stories most likely to be effective begin with *discovered* topics, where in the process of gathering information there is an eye-opening moment, a realization, that helps the Author understand a puzzling or problematic Audience response. Not all topics are discovered. Sometimes, the process of gathering information holds little in the way of surprising insights. Still, gathering information results in a more detailed understanding of a situation or concept, and helps the Author make an informed 'best guess' to identify a topic. Taking time to identify a meaningful and manageable topic can minimize Author frustration as the Story is developed.

3. Write the Story: This is a critical step and not nearly as easy or fast as some Authors would like! Too many Authors start with this step, deciding upon a topic without gathering information. There's a reason why Social Stories have never been associated with the term 'shortcut'. Time invested in gathering information saves huge time later, and improves Story quality.

4. Review and revise: Every Social Story has at least one 'rough draft'. Team review of a story draft is required before it is declared a final draft. This catches inaccuracies, as well as providing an opportunity to add critical content, improve the text or illustration, or check for adherence to the Social Story Criteria.

5. Introduce the Story: This step seems simple enough, until an Author arrives at that moment when a story is introduced to the Audience. The 10th Social Story Criterion supports Authors through this process, and helps them avoid mistakes that may derail the positive potential of the story.

Question 5: Social Story Illustrations

Which of these photos would never appear in a Social Story about swimming? Indicate your answer(s) with a check (tick).

A. __√___
B. _____
C. __√___
D. _____
E. __√___

Answer as indicated above, explanation below.

Illustrating a Social Story involves the consideration of many factors, including those related to the topic, as well as to the age, ability, and interests of the Audience. Safety is the overriding consideration throughout the development of every Social Story, and it is the one factor that can definitively exclude the use of a potential illustration.

That is the situation here. 'B' and 'D' are the only photos that may potentially be considered for use in a Social Story about swimming. The others picture children swimming alone, without supervision. Just as a child, adolescent, or adult with autism may interpret spoken words or text literally, at face value, the same may be true of illustration. This could result in a potentially dangerous interpretation of 'A', 'C', or 'E', that it is okay to swim alone.

Question 6: *Really, Anne?*

You're writing a Social Story. You've asked your friend, Anne, to review a first draft. She suggests that you include a reference to a similar, past experience in your story to connect events over time. Is Anne's suggestion part of the Social Story Criteria, or is it solely one of Anne's ideas?

Anne's suggestion is based on part of the 5th Social Story Criterion that requires Authors to consider including references to relevant past, present, and/or future experiences to tie events together over time, demonstrating the 'links' between the experiences of the Audience.

Question 7: Jackson's Helmet

For questions 7 and 8, imagine that you are Jackson Parks' teacher. Jackson is six years old and loves turtles. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Parks, have sent you an email with two attachments, stories for Jackson. They have tried to follow all of the Social Story Criteria, including the important processes involved in Story development. They respect your opinion, and are asking for your feedback. Are these Social Stories? Do you have any suggestions for them?

Learning About My Bicycle Helmet

I am learning about my bicycle helmet. My parents will help me.

This boy is wearing a bicycle helmet. A bicycle helmet is important safety equipment.

I will try to remember my bicycle helmet whenever I ride my bicycle. I will keep it on my head while I ride. This is very, very important.

Answer: Praise the Parks' efforts, then explain why *Learning About My Bicycle Helmet,* is not a Social Story.

As Jackson's teacher, you need to address Mr. and Mrs. Parks' question, "Is this a Social Story?" On first review, it reads like a Social Story. It has that overall patient and unassuming tone that is characteristic of all Social Stories. However, a positive tone does not automatically mean that it's a Social Story.

The Social Story Rating for *Learning About My Bicycle Helmet* is 1.3. That's too low. For a story to be a Social Story, it has to meet all criteria and have a Rating of 2.0 or higher. Using the current Social Stories 10.2 Criteria, the Story Rating is determined by dividing the total number of Descriptive Sentences by the total number of Coaching Sentences. There are four Descriptive Sentences and three Coaching Sentences, resulting in a Story Rating of 1.3.

The 9th Social Story Criterion, *Nine to Refine,* is there to help Mr. and Mrs. Parks catch their own errors. It requires checking a story to make sure that it meets all of the Social Story Criteria. Perhaps though, they did that, and made a mistake in their calculation of the Social Story Rating. Their request to you, as Jackson's teacher, to review the story is also a part of the 9th Criterion, an important checks and balances in the art and science of Social Stories.

One final suggestion: Jackson loves turtles! A helmet is similar to the shell of a land tortoise – and serves a similar purpose! Adding this information to Jackson's story is likely to capture his interest and attention.

Question 8: Jasmine's Glove

What Happened to the Glove that I Found?

Yesterday, I found a glove in the hall at school. Lost things belong to someone, but I did not know who had lost the glove that I found. I took the glove to Mrs. Williams in the office. Mrs. Williams put the glove in the *Lost and Found Box*. It is a box where students can look for their lost things.

Jasmine is a student at my school. She lost her glove. Today, Jasmine looked for her glove outside, in her locker, and in her classroom. Then she went to the office and looked in the Lost and Found box in the office. There it was!

The gloves are very special to Jasmine because they were a birthday gift from her Grandmother. She is warm at recess again. She is so happy to have both of her gloves!

I found Jasmine's glove! Taking lost items to the office is a smart and helpful thing to do!

Answer: Praise for the Parks'! They have written an important Social Story for Jackson!

Mr. and Mrs. Parks have not only developed a Social Story, they have taken care to follow an all too frequently overlooked element of the 2nd Social Story Criterion. *What Happened to that Glove that I Found?* describes Jackson's great decision to take a lost glove to the office. Half of all of the Social Stories written on behalf of any Audience must applaud what the Audience currently does well. Examples include a Story that is written praise for a specific talent, decision, or response.

There's a sound reason why Authors are required to use Social Stories to systematically praise an Audience. A child, adolescent, or autism may encounter frequent correction, as well as Social Stories teaching difficult concepts and skills. This can diminish self-esteem without equal, detailed, meaningful recognition of that which the Audience does well. The requirement that half of all Social Stories praise what the Audience adds meaning and important detail to our praise, building self-esteem and the social and emotional resilience that learning and practice require.

A final note about *What Happened to the Glove that I Found?* It is obvious that the Parks gathered information prior to developing a Story to praise their son. Jackson has a fun and positive personality, the Jackson's had several different areas to explore and gather information to find a topic. They have chosen a topic that helps them to demonstrate the important links between events in this situation – finding a glove on one day and turning it into the office and Jasmine looking for it and finding it the next. The Story also works to support generalization in the final paragraph, beginning with, *I found Jasmine's glove,* written from the first person perspective to recruit Jackson's attention. This is followed by a more general statement, *Taking lost items to the office is a smart and helpful thing to do,* to praise Jackson for his actions while at the same time emphasizing that turning in *any* lost item to the office, not just Jasmine's glove, is helpful.

Question 9: Social Story Math

Test your Social Story math skills! Place a check by each of your answers. Answers as indicated.

a. How many Social Story Goals are there? Place a check by your answer.

__√__ One. All Social Stories share the same goal.

_____ Three. There's the *Social Story Goal* for children up to age 11, the *Social Junior Article Goal* for pre
teens and adolescents age 12-17, and the *Social Article Goal* for adults age 18 and over.

_____ The number is always increasing.   Each Social Story is developed with consideration of a specific
child, adolescent, or adult, so the Goal for each Story varies depending upon its topic, individual
learning characteristics and interests, and desired outcomes.

b. How many questions guide the development of every Social Story? Underline your answer.

　　　　　　1　　　　　　　　3　　　　　　　**6**　　　　　　　It varies depending on the Story.

c. The Social Story Criteria are periodically updated and revised to reflect research findings and experience with the approach. According to the latest Social Stories 10.2 Criteria, how many different types of Social Story Sentences are there? Underline your answer.

      2   4   5   7   8

d. For a story to be considered a Social Story, the Social Story Formula must have a quotient that is greater than or equal to _____.

      2   3   1.5   4   5

10. Question 10: Social Story Logo

At left is the Social Story Logo. Why is it important?

Answer and explanation below.

Social Stories were developed in the early 1990s, before the Internet changed how information is shared worldwide. Despite the 'disadvantage' of no Internet exposure early on, the grassroots popularity of Social Stories spread like wildfire. It could be said that they were forced to grow up fast – and as they did, the challenge was, and is to this day, to maintain their original quality, safety, and integrity.

If you type in the term, "Social Stories" in quotes on the Internet today, the search will yield about six hundred thousand sites. Many of them use the term social stories much differently than it has been defined, resulting in inaccurate and misleading information and examples that threaten the safety and integrity of the approach. A website may also use Carol Gray's name with an implication or inference that she is collaborating with their information. Carol Gray introduced the term, 'Social Story' and the original definition, and has been the caretaker for the approach since the beginning. Currently, Carol is involved with just one site on the Internet, CarolGraySocialStories.com.

This brings us to the answer to this question regarding the importance of the Social Story logo. For parents and professionals seeking information about Social Stories, the logo is an assurance that the information is the 'genuine article'. In the Internet sea of imitation – or anywhere, for that matter - it's nice to know there are buoys that mark a safe and informative journey. Your time is valuable and in limited supply. The Social Story logo is the easiest and most definitive way to ensure that your efforts to learn about Social Stories will be invested with sound information. CarolGraySocialStories.com is the only website that can legally use the Social Story logo.

When we write on behalf of a child, adolescent, or adult with autism, we've an opportunity to share information with a mind that may perceive and process information differently. Let's be careful in there.