

## Social Scripts

Social scripts use clear focused language and pictures to help a person with ASD to better understand potentially stressful scenarios and provide realistic expectations and options. They can be helpful for travel, holidays, establishing routines, transitions or visits to new and unfamiliar places.

When you are writing social scripts remember that for young children they need to be written from the first person perspective using personal pronouns such as "I" or use the child's name.

When you are writing social scripts for teenagers or adults they need to be in the third person perspective using 'he' or 'she' and the style can look like a magazine article.

### 10 Key Reasons Why Social Scripts Work Well

1. Social scripts describe a situation, skill or concept in terms of relevant social cues, perspectives and common responses. The intention of these stories is to share accurate information in a reassuring manner.
2. Social scripts should describe, affirm and consolidate abilities that the child already does well.
3. Preparing social scripts enables other people to understand and see the situation and perspective of the child.
4. It may help others to see why his or her behaviour can appear confused, anxious, aggressive or disobedient.
5. Once the social script has been used it can be used by others to help implement the new knowledge and stories.
6. You can weave a child's special interest into the story.
7. Social scripts use very positive language.
8. The suggestions are always about what the child should be doing rather than what not to do.
9. They are very useful in teaching children about friendship and friendship skills.
10. The child can keep a folder of all scripts and refer to it anytime to remind him or herself of the story and the lesson within.

### 3 Key Strategies in Creating Social Scripts

There are three key steps in creating social scripts. The three steps will help to clarify information for the student. Remember that the information needs to be organised and follow a logical sequence.

1. A social script has:
  - A title and introduction that clearly identifies the topic.
  - A body that adds detail.
  - A conclusion that reinforces and summarises information.
2. Use past experiences in social scripts as they will:
  - Help build self-esteem.
  - Help with problem solving.
  - Help to anticipate likely outcomes.
3. The past helps to make predictions about what happens next.

## Peers in the Classroom and Supporting Friendships

The children in the class of a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) will need explanations and guidance in understanding and encouraging the friendship abilities of their classmate.

These children already know that their classmate does not play or interact with them in the same way as other children. Without guidance and support from teachers, the reaction to the child with ASD can be rejection and ridicule rather than acceptance and inclusion in their activities.

There are many reasons to inform classmates of the attributes of ASD and these may include:

- Preventing bullying and teasing by pointing out some of the difficulties he is experiencing.
- Stopping misinformation being circulated (such as 'Johnny is weird').
- Preventing 'perceived favouritism' – helping classmates become more accepting that some accommodations may be made for students with ASD that won't be available to them.

We also need to teach peers how to respond to behaviours that appear unfriendly. Promoting a *peer understanding programme* will encourage understanding, tolerance and acceptance of differences in the classroom and the playground.

Children with ASD who attend mainstream education classes may be more likely to improve their social skills if their typically developing peers are taught how to interact with them, than if only the children with ASD are required to adapt and taught such skills. Given the right direction and support, peers can be very helpful in creating an environment that nurtures and respects the student with ASD, improving his or her self-esteem, engagement and success.

The biggest argument against sharing specific information about a child and his/her disability, specifically with peers, is that of increased stigmatisation. Research suggests that child-specific information presented within a broader curriculum about autism does not lead to stigmatisation and may in fact have the opposite effect of helping children better understand and accept their peers with autism.

*Excerpt from The Ultimate Guide to School and Home pg 28.*

**Improvement in behaviour doesn't come from the social script - it comes from improved understanding of events and situation.**

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**The Ultimate Guide to School and Home: By Sue Larkey and Anna Tulleman**

This book provides key strategies for all ages and stages. It offers over 500 practical strategies and time savers for school and home. Everything from setting up a classroom, developing friendships, engaging disengaged students; to moving house, choosing a school and applying for a job. It is the ultimate guide for teachers, parents and all professionals supporting children with autism spectrum disorder, including Asperger's, ADD, ADHD, ODD and other developmental delays.

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