

Scripted Stories for Social Situations—Tip Sheet

The rules or expectations of social interactions are typically learned by example. Children with communication difficulties and/or behavior challenges often do not learn these interactions incidentally but may need more explicit instructions through a scripted description of the social situation.

Scripted stories for social situations help children understand social interactions, situations, expectations, social cues, the script of unfamiliar activities, and/or social rules. As the title implies, they are brief descriptive stories that provide information regarding a social situation. When children are given information that helps them understand the expectations of a situation, their challenging behavior within that situation is reduced or minimized. Parents, teachers, and caregivers can use these simple stories as a tool to prepare the child for a new situation, to address challenging behavior within a setting or situation, or to teach new skills. The following is an example of a scripted story explaining when it's appropriate to run.

RUNNING

I like to run. It is fun to go fast.

It's okay to run when I am playing outside.

I can run when I am on the playground.

Sometimes I feel like running, but it is dangerous to run when I am inside.

Running inside could hurt me or other people.

When people are inside, they walk.

Walking inside is safe.

I will try to walk inside and only run when I am outside on the playground.

My teachers and parents like it when I remember to walk inside.

WRITING A SCRIPTED STORY

Begin by observing the child in the situation you are addressing. Try to take on the child's perspective and include aspects of his or her feelings or views in the story. Also, include usual occurrences in the social situation, clear "expectations," and the perspective of others, along with considering possible variations.

There are three types of sentences used in writing a scripted story:

1. **Descriptive sentences:** objectively define anticipated events where a situation occurs, who is involved, what they are doing and why (e.g., When people are inside, they walk.).
2. **Perspective sentences:** describe the internal status of the person or persons involved, their thoughts, feelings, or moods (e.g., Running inside could hurt me or other people.).
3. **Directive sentences:** are individualized statements of desired responses stated in a positive manner. They may begin "I can try..." or "I will work on..." Try to avoid sentences starting with "Do not" or definitive statements (e.g., I will try to walk in inside.).

A scripted story should have three to five descriptive and perspective sentences for each directive sentence. Avoid using too many directive sentences.

Write in first person and on the child's developmental skill level. Also remember to use pictures that fit within the child's developmental skill level to supplement text.

Reference: Broek, E., Cain, S.L., Dutkiewicz, M., Fleck, L., Grey, B., Grey, C., et al. (1994). *The original social story™ book*. Arlington, TX: Future Education. www.thegraycenter.org