

Asking For Help



Special Learning
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Special Learning's mission is to help individuals with **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**, Down syndrome and other developmental disabilities, around the globe, achieve their highest level of potential. We provide customized solutions that inform, educate and empower parents, care providers, educators and professionals to implement effective teaching and treatment practices. Our comprehensive line of products and services, developed in accordance with Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) practices, is designed to promote successful learning and independence for individuals with special needs.

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For all individuals with special needs who inspire us
to reach toward a brighter future for all.

– **Karen Chung**, Founder and CEO,
Special Learning, Inc.



Sometimes I need help to complete an activity
or get something that I need.



Asking for help only takes 2 simple steps:



First, I will find an adult.



Second, I will ask, "Can you help me, please?"

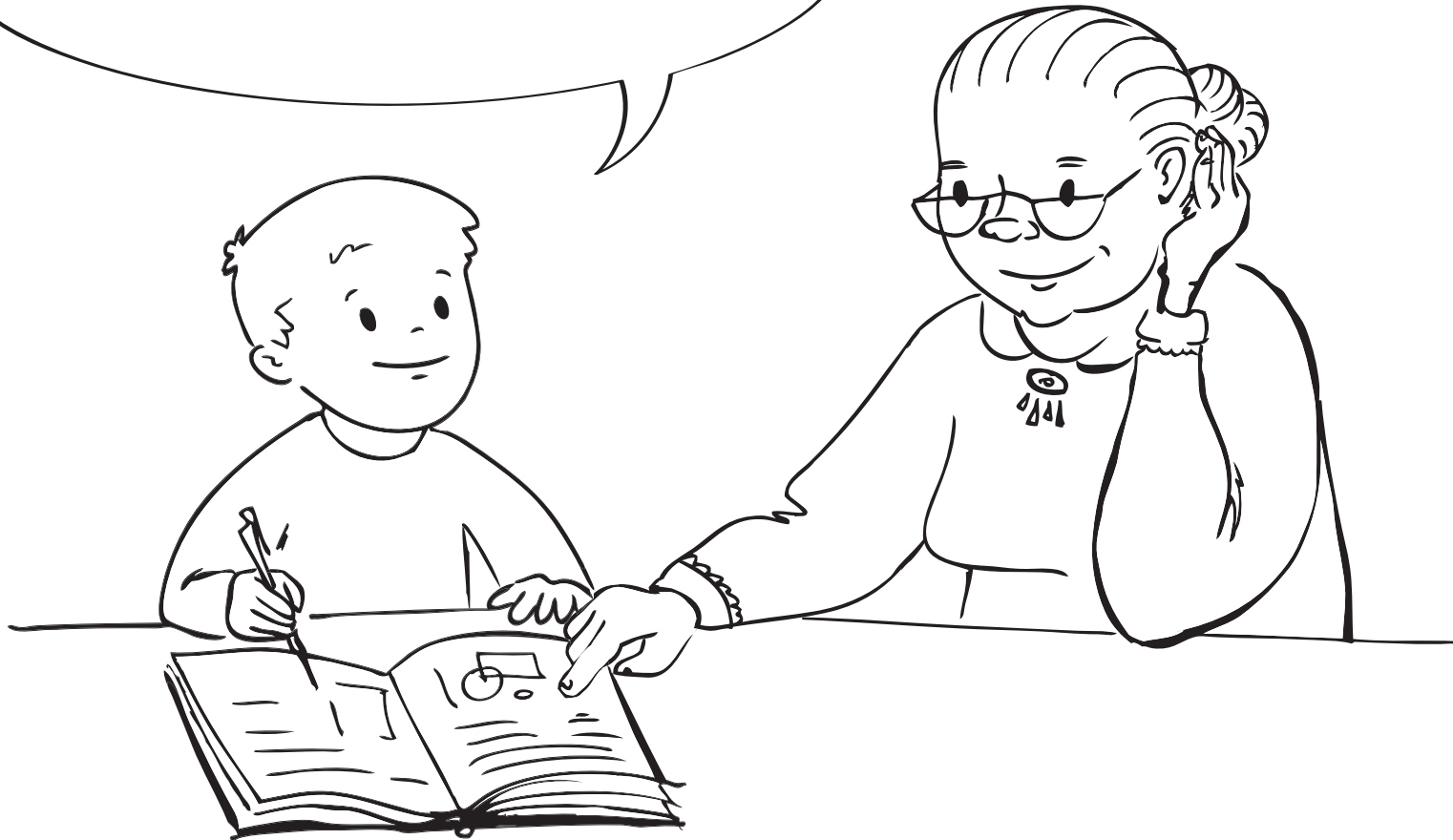




When I need something from a high place, I can find an adult and ask, “Can you help me, please?”



Can you help me, please?



When I need help completing my math homework, I can find an adult and ask, "Can you help me, please?"





It is easy to ask for help when I remember to find an adult and ask nicely. Adults are happy to help me when I ask them nicely.





This is the end of the story.



Instructional Guide for Using **Asking For Help** Social Story

Social Stories: Unlocking Social Growth

Most children start developing social skills at a young age by learning through their environment. Basic social skills like greeting others, asking for help, sharing, and waiting their turn are lessons that children generally pick up by watching others, imitating what they see and taking notice of social cues in their environment. Children with special needs, like Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Down syndrome, and other developmental disabilities often do not understand what is taking place in their own environment. Social skills are one of the core deficits of an individual with ASD, thus causing them to be less likely to engage appropriately in social situations. Children with special needs often require more structured interventions to teach them the skills they need to be successful in society and to have more positive experiences with peers. One of the most successful strategies to teach social skills to children with special needs is through social stories.

What is a social story?

Social stories are short stories that depict specific social situations that children with special needs may encounter. Each unique story features a lesson to teach certain social norms and behaviors accepted in society that a child with special needs may find difficult or confusing. Through the use of repetitive examples and illustrations, social stories help a child understand behavior that is expected of them in society, thus preventing further anxiety on the part of your child and allowing them to fit in more comfortably in society.

There are several distinguishing characteristics of a social story that set it apart from any other children's story:

1. Social stories are very short stories.
2. Social stories are personalized.
3. Social stories are written in first person, from the perspective of the child.
4. Social stories use very simplified language.

How are social stories created?

The first step in creating a social story is to decide on what social behavior will be targeted. Each Special Learning social story targets a specific behavior or skill for a specific age group. Parents may wish to target different behaviors than teachers, but it's important to realize that social stories can cross over to any environment. When choosing a social story that targets a specific behavior, it's necessary to assess a child's current skill level to determine if he or she has the prerequisite skills necessary to be successful at learning the new behavior.

Social stories are written with a child's strengths in mind. They are meant to be positive and engage the child in learning something new by focusing on what they are already good at and what makes them feel good about themselves. To accomplish this, three different sentence types are used, all designed to teach and reinforce positive and targeted behavior.

1. **Descriptive Sentences:** These types of sentences objectively define where a situation occurs, who is involved, what they are doing, and why. Descriptive sentences give context to the situation.

Example: "Sometimes things are hard to do. Trying means doing my best even though it is hard."

2. **Directive Sentences:** These are individualized statements of desired responses.

Example: "When someone gives you something you say THANK YOU."

3. **Perspective Sentences:** These sentences describe the feelings and reactions of others in certain situations.

Example: "It makes my family and friends happy when I wear clean clothes every day."

Benefits of Social Stories

Social stories are an effective intervention for children with special needs for several reasons. Social stories take skills that may be complex and overwhelming for a child with special needs and break them down into steps that are much easier to understand. They have been shown to successfully reduce disruptive behaviors, and increase peer interaction and social engagement. Social stories provide both visual cues and verbal cues to a learner, thus leading to a more integrated approach for learners of different levels. Parents, educators and caregivers can read the story to the child, or can engage individuals in reading the story on their own because of the simplistic language that a social story uses.

Social stories can be written to teach a wide variety of skills and behaviors, and are ideal for use in any environment. Because of their short length, social stories are a quick way to introduce or reinforce a skill in the child's natural learning environment. Through the use of simple, repetitious language, social stories promote more practice of the skills being taught.

Using Social Stories for Teaching

It may seem like a no brainer incorporating a social story into your teaching repertoire, right? Not so fast. While social stories are very easy to use for any parent, teacher, or caregiver, it's important to remember a few key tips to optimize learning.

1. Assess the child's current learning level to determine appropriate social story level.
2. Evaluate prerequisite skills before deciding on what skills to teach.
3. Establish a routine with each social story based on what skills you are teaching.
4. Allow easy access to the social story to promote independent learning.
5. Prompt the child to read the story on their own at regular times throughout the day or directly before entering certain social situations.
6. Involve other family members, caregivers, treatment team members, and peers to reinforce generalization of the skills.
7. Utilize teachable moments by reading the stories to your child while in the social situation or during a behavioral moment.

8. Reinforce times where desired skill or behavior is taking place by reading the story and providing positive reinforcement to the child for displaying appropriate behavior.
9. Upon mastery of skill, continue to review social story periodically to maintain the skill.

The use of social stories with a child with special needs may be challenging at first. Many times, it takes multiple reads of the story with consistent reinforcement of each lesson before a child can begin to perform the skill appropriately. A parent, teacher, or caregiver can help by praising the child after reading the story and reinforcing the child for displaying appropriate behavior in the social situation. Assistance should be provided to the child in reading the story and providing additional understanding. However, assistance should be limited and faded out over time to increase independence. Once the user is able to read the story independently and perform the behavior appropriately, it can be considered mastered and moved into a schedule of maintenance.

Special Learning Social Stories

At Special Learning we take an integrated approach to teaching all of life's most important skills. Each book is coded by Skill(s) and Age to help you determine the most appropriate story to use for your own child. All of our social stories fit together to create a robust teaching curriculum of fundamental lessons, including basic social skills, school readiness skills, independent living skills, and more.

References:

More, Cori, C. (2008).

Digital Stories Targeting Social Skills for Children with Disabilities: Multidimensional Learning. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 43(2), 168-177.

If you liked this social story, you will love these additional titles from **Special Learning**:



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Special Learning Social Stories

Unlocking Social Growth One Story at a Time



Special Learning

Social stories are tools for teaching social skills to individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities. Written from the perspective of the student, these stories outline a set of “rules” the student should follow in various social settings to help him navigate situations which might otherwise prove difficult or cause discomfort. The goal of these stories is to prepare the student to address common situations by understanding expected norms and appropriate responses, using repetitive examples, for specific situations that he might encounter.

Although there has not been sufficient research to scientifically validate the effectiveness of social stories, anecdotal evidence suggests that these tools can be a very effective means of teaching social skills to a certain population of students with autism spectrum disorder.



The following Classification Key allows users to easily identify the most appropriate story for a specific situation by SKILL(S) and AGE GROUP.

Social Story Classification Key

<u>Skills Taught</u>	<u>Age Group</u>
Social Skills	Pre-K, Kindergarten, Elementary
Basic Communication	Pre-K, Kindergarten, Elementary

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