

# HOW, WHY & WHEN TO USE *Social Scripts*

**Social scripts are a great tool for helping people with Neurodiversity.** The importance of social scripts is summed up beautifully in the book “Blue Bottle Mystery” by Kathy Hoopman. When discussing his son Ben’s diagnosis, the father in the book has this conversation with his doctor:

**Father:** “It’s not easy to understand Ben, Doctor. I try but it’s not easy.”

**Doctor:** “I know, but you only have one kid that’s hard to understand. Ben finds it hard to understand everybody!” (pg 69).

Social Scripts are a key tool for children like Ben. They help children with ASD understand us, our rules, what we mean and how to interact. Here are three types to try & a template to write your own.

## Type 1 SOCIAL SCRIPTS THAT EXPLAIN “OTHER PEOPLE’S THOUGHTS, EXPECTATIONS”

These social stories normally explain the impact of actions on other people. My favourite is “your friends are happy when you talk about dinosaurs only three times a day”. Below is another example. To make your own, you can add photos, make into a little book etc

### RELIEF TEACHER



Relief teachers know how to help children learn and do their best. The relief teacher may do things differently and that’s okay. Relief teachers like it when children follow classroom rules and use their best manners.

Your regular classroom teacher will be happy if you follow classroom rules with a relief teacher too.

## Type 2 SOCIAL SCRIPTS THAT EXPLAIN “WHAT TO DO IN NEW OR DIFFERENT SITUATIONS”

Transitions, new environments or big changes often cause the child to feel enormous anxiety and stress, which in turn can lead to behaviour. Social scripts can help children with ASD, ADHD, ODD and PDA by preparing them for new events and situations. Many children need “reasons”: why do we have to move classrooms? Why can’t I stay with my friends? You can create social scripts to explain this and they can refer back to them.

Anna Tullemans’ son Daniel used to run to his bedroom when his Grandma arrived. This is a social script Anna Tullemans to help her son Daniel with the new sensory experiences of Grandma arriving.

### GRANDMA’S VISIT



When Grandma comes to visit, she likes to give you a big hug.

Grandmothers like to hug their grandchildren.

When Grandma hugs you, count to 3, then say “it’s nice to see you Grandma.”



## Example of How to Write a Social Script

My name is...If I don't know what to do I can ask for help.

### Title

Introduces the topic/  
scenario

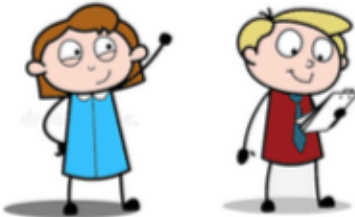


Sometimes I need to ask  
the teacher for help.

It's okay to ask for help  
when I don't know what to  
do.

### Perspective Sentence

Makes the script personal  
for the child and more  
specific to them. It appeals  
to their literalness.



I put my hand up to attract  
the teacher's attention.

I look towards the teacher.

### Coaching Sentence

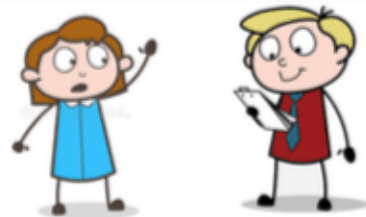
Keeps it positive and tells  
the child what to do.



Sometimes the teacher  
is busy with someone  
else, that is okay I can  
wait for help.

### Alternative Scenario

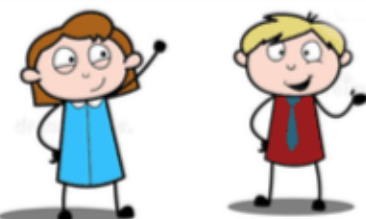
Include likely scenarios  
to avoid anxiety



When the teacher has  
finished with the other  
student I can call out in a  
medium voice, "Excuse  
me."

### Descriptive Sentence

Teaches the social skills  
necessary in the scenario



I wait for the teacher to  
look at me and say my  
name.

I then ask my question.



When the teacher has  
answered my question I  
say, "Thank you."

### Conclusion -> Affirmation

Positively reinforces and  
restates the original  
purpose with addition  
information

It is okay to ask the teacher for help if I don't know  
what to do.



## Type 3 SOCIAL STORIES THAT EXPLAIN EXPECTATIONS AND RULES IN FAMILIAR SITUATIONS

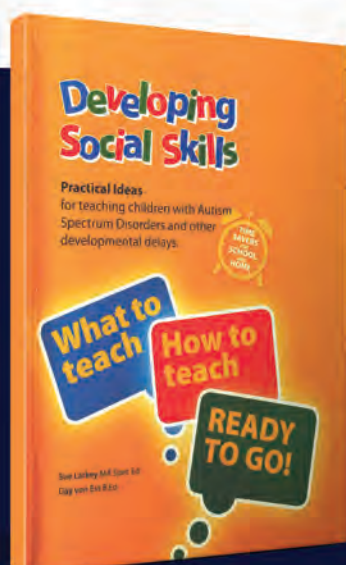
Neurotypical students seem to learn what to do without explicitly being taught. In my experience ASD, ADHD, ODD and PDA students need support to understand expectations and rules in scenarios like losing something, making a mistake or waiting in a line. Creating a social script to explain concepts can change a child's ability to complete work. Below is an example from 'How to Stop Your Words from Bumping into Someone'

### ASKING FOR HELP

Put your hand up to attract the teacher's attention. Look towards the teacher and wait for the teacher to say your name.

Once the teacher calls on you, ask your question.

When the teacher has answered your question, say thank you.



## DEVELOPING SOCIAL SKILLS

Practical ideas for teaching children with AS and other developmental delays.

by Sue Larkey and Gay von Ess

A starting point for teaching and encouraging social interactions and skills for children with autism spectrum disorders and other developmental delays. It is a useful concrete and visual resource which when coupled with videoing, role playing and modeling will help young primary school age children with an autism spectrum disorder to better understand the social world around them. This book includes 100s of ideas, social stories and worksheets. It is a great resource full of time savers for home and school.

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