

Jackie's Tips for Creating a Good Social Story

1. Begin at the beginning- the very beginning!
 - a. This can mean before the child even arrives at the museum
 - b. Think about the obstacles they may encounter on their ride/in transit
 - c. If you have a shuttle that is used to get from the parking lot, trails to walk through, or other accessibility barriers, please include them!
 - d. Include any emotions a child might feel during the transition to entering and be sure to remind them an adult will help and it is okay
2. Once inside, think about the people/things they will immediately interact with
 - a. If there is a guided tour, tell them they will have a guide and what to expect from that person while they are on a tour
 - i. This is also a good time to remind them of proper behavior/manners for asking questions or using fidgets during the tour
 - ii. If the child has social anxiety, it is a good idea to remind them it is ok to simply listen to the tour
3. Walk the tour yourself
 - a. Taking the tour yourself, notice anything that might be an issue for someone with sensory processing disorders, autism, etc.
 - b. Are there flashing lights, loud noises, congested areas?
 - i. Be sure to include these items within the social story
 - ii. This will prepare the child to expect those things before they arrive, which will help reduce the number of meltdowns
 - c. If you have a quiet room, have a directional in the social story to tell the parents where the child can be taken to decompress if a meltdown occurs (outside it ok too- just say it in a positive manner and train your staff to suggest it in that way)
4. If there might be significant directions to necessary areas like restrooms or lunch spaces, please include that as well
5. End on a high note!
 - a. Remind the child that museums are fun!
 - b. Be sure to also remind them to thank the people who helped them
 - c. Use visuals in the social story at the end to indicate the child is happy when he/she leaves the museum (because it was so much fun!)
 - d. Invite them to return again
6. If you are developing programs that children with ASD might attend, consider also creating social stories for those scenarios

Here is a great resource for a template to create your own social story (I use the restaurant one and modify it): <https://www.autismspeaks.org/templates-personalized-teaching-stories>

Thank you for making the museum world safe and fun for kids with ASD!

Jackie Spainhour, Director, Hunter House Victorian Museum

Design Your Social Story Worksheet

Start at the Beginning- where does the child's experience begin?

Walking inside- what will the child immediately see/hear/touch?

What behaviors do you want the child to exhibit while in the facility? What are proper manners?

What areas might pose an issue? Loud? Flashing Lights?

How should the child interact with the guide, if there is one?

What happens when it is time to leave? Is there a gift shop, a lunch area, etc.?

What other problems might arise? What should children and their parents know ahead of time?