

Using the Autism Speaks Personalized Stories Templates

Many children on the autism spectrum need help in learning how to act in different types of social situations. They also benefit from having information presented visually, whether it's through a chart, a booklet, or an electronic device. These personalized stories were developed to provide a visual means of helping children know what to expect in different situations, as well as to learn what is expected of *them* in these situations. Through pictures and simple language, these stories can make everyday social situations more predictable for children, as well as give them strategies for navigating these situations more effectively.

Every child on the autism spectrum is unique. Different children can react more or less successfully to the same type of situation. Words and pictures that are effective for one child may not work nearly as well with another. A story for a child with autism will be more effective if it is personalized for the child and customized specifically for that child's needs.

Microsoft PowerPoint, the widely available business presentation tool, provides functionality that parents and therapists can use to develop personalized stories to explain social situations to children and youth with autism. To demonstrate how this common business and education tool can be used, Autism Speaks and the READI Lab at the University of Washington¹ have collaborated to develop several PowerPoint templates that are available completely free of charge and can be personalized by parents and therapists to meet the unique needs of individual children.

Personalized story templates are available for the situations below:

- Going to a Restaurant
- Going to a Store
- Handling Bullying
- Potty Training
- Taking Turns
- Having a Play Date

The rest of this article explains how to use PowerPoint to personalize these story templates to explain particular social situations to your child:

- Finding and downloading the personalized story templates
- Basic editing tasks to personalize the story
- Replacing photo placeholders with your own personal photos
- Creating your own personalized story

¹ Microsoft Office also contributed to the original packaging and distribution of these templates through a content partnership with Autism Speaks. University of Washington contributors to story content, illustrations, and photos include: Wendy Stone, PhD, Thanh Nguyen, MA, Kelly Johnson, PhD, Ashley Penney, MEd, BCBA, Amy Rodda, PhC, CCC-SLP, Raphael Bernier, PhD, Samuel Zinner, MD, Charu Gupta, MEd, BCBA, Catherine Brock, MA, and Eileen Feldman, PhD, BCBA-D.

- Printing your personalized story for a wall chart or booklet
- Saving your personalized stories for display on an iPad or iPhone
- Saving your personalized stories for viewing on Windows PC

Downloading the PowerPoint Templates

These personalized story templates can be downloaded from either the Autism Speaks website or the READI Lab website. All templates are packaged together in a *.zip file format along with these instructions. Once the *.zip file is downloaded to your computer, you may use the Windows File Explorer or other tool to extract each individual template and these instructions.

Basic Editing Tasks

These are YOUR family stories to personalize. Please modify these PowerPoint presentations so that they best represent your family's situation and the needs of your child.

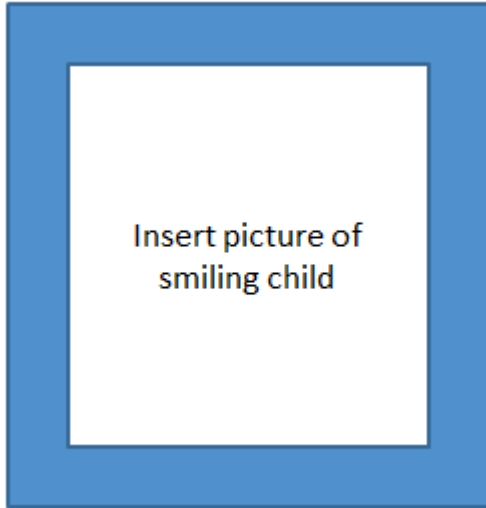
Common editing tasks are:

- Modify the text on a slide. Just click on the text you want to change and start typing.
- Modify the images on a slide. Follow the instructions in [Replacing Photo Placeholders](#) below for instructions on how to add photos and clip art to your personalized story.
- Modify "Things to Try" at the end of each template. The final slide in each template contains some suggestions for the child to try to improve his experience in these situations. Please modify the ideas on these slides with your own suggestions to help your child.
- Add a new slide. Click on the **Home** tab and then on the **New Slide** command. You can also select what type of new slide you want by clicking on the drop down on the button.

While the above are simple ways you can modify these templates, PowerPoint provides many other features you can use to customize these templates to educate and entertain your child. Microsoft Office.com provides [several free online training courses for PowerPoint](#) and help articles that you may find useful in editing these templates.

Replacing Photo Placeholders

Several of the personalized story templates contain "placeholder" graphics - a blue frame with a description of an image to include - that you should replace with photos of your child and/or family in particular situations. These placeholder graphics look like this:



To replace the photo placeholder with a picture from your local computer:

1. Click on the photo placeholder
2. Click on the **Insert** tab and then on the **Picture** command.
3. Select the photo that you want to include and click **Insert**
4. Resize and move the photo to fit in the slide

You can also drag picture files from your computer directly on to your personalized story or copy and paste it onto an existing object.

Creating Your Own Personalized Story

The templates provided are only a small sample of the types of personalized stories you can create with Microsoft PowerPoint to help explain social situations to a child with autism. Every child with autism is different and needs help in different areas. You are encouraged to customize and improve on the simple concepts in these templates to create your own personalized stories to meet the social needs of your child.

If you would like to use the visual elements used in these personalized story templates to create your own original stories, do the following:

1. Open one of the current personalized story templates
2. Delete all of the existing slides
3. Save the presentation under a new name

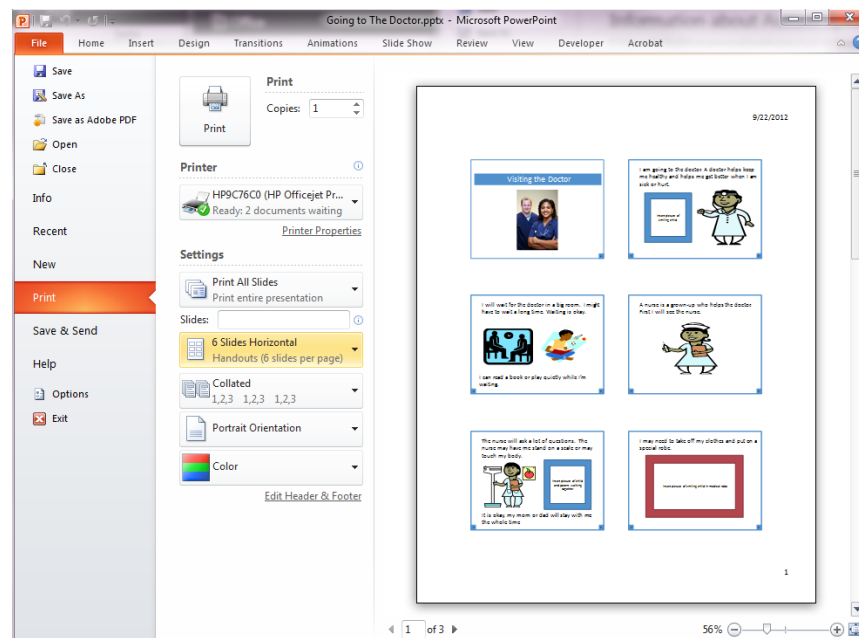
The new blank presentation that you saved contains the Slide Master of the original Autism Speaks personal story templates. The Slide Master contains the blue border, back and next buttons, simple pages with images in the middle with text on the top and bottom, the Autism Speaks color theme, and other visual elements. The Slide Master of these Autism Speaks templates will enable you to create simple personalized stories with the same look and feel as the Autism Speaks templates.

In addition, you may want to edit the Slide Master to create your own look and feel. For more instructions on how to create your own Slide Master, visit Microsoft Office.com and search for “slide master”

Printing your Personalized Story for a Wall Chart or Booklet

After creating and editing your personalized story, you may want to print it out to use as a wall chart or compile into a booklet. PowerPoint provides the ability to print multiple slides of a presentation on a single sheet of paper, which is useful for a wall chart, or to cut out slides to collate in a booklet. To print multiple slides per page, use the following procedure:

1. After completing you personalized story, click on the **File** tab and choose the **Print** command in PowerPoint
2. Click on the drop down to select the number of slides to print out per page. Choosing either 2, 4, or 6 slides per page is most effective
3. Click on the **Print** button



Saving your Personalized Story for Display on an iPhone or iPad

If your child will view the personalized story on an Apple iPhone or iPad, save your PowerPoint presentation in the Adobe Acrobat PDF format and e-mail the PDF file or put it on a file sharing service such as Microsoft OneDrive or Google Drive.

To save the personalized story as a PDF, use the following steps:

- After customizing your personalized story, click on the **File** tab and then on the **Save As** command.
- When the **Save As** dialog box appears, click on the **Save As Type** drop down, and select **PDF**.
- Click **Save**

After saving your personalized story as a PDF, send it for your child to view on the iPhone or iPad by including it as an e-mail attachment or by putting it on a free file sharing service such as Microsoft SkyDrive and including a link to it in mail.

Saving your Personalized Story for viewing on a Windows PC

If your child will view the personalized story on a Windows PC, then you can save the file in native PowerPoint *.pptx format. In the native PowerPoint format, all the functionality of PowerPoint presentations are available if you choose to include some of PowerPoint's advanced features in your personalized story.

If you save your personalized story in native PowerPoint format, you can also display and edit your personalized story even if you do not have the most current version of PowerPoint on your computer or phone. Some options:

- Most Internet browsers for both PCs and phones will display native PowerPoint files. The type of browser you use will determine how well the personalized story is displayed and how easy it will be for your child to navigate through the story.
- PowerPoint files stored on Microsoft OneDrive can also be edited via your browser.
- PowerPoint files created and edited on PowerPoint on a Windows PC can also be viewed and edited using PowerPoint for the Macintosh.

Conclusion

These personalized story templates are yours to customize and share with your child. As every child on the autism spectrum has different strengths and needs, these personalized story templates provided by Autism Speaks and the READI Lab at the University of Washington cover only a fraction of the social situations that your child may encounter. We encourage you to create your own personal stories using the techniques in this document to share with and help teach your child.

Please send any feedback you have on these personalized story templates to

autismtemplates@hotmail.com.

The information in this article is aimed to provide you with some technical tips and tricks to customize these personalized stories. But technology can only take one so far. It's now up to you to add your creativity and love.