



I am...

Digital Story Guides

This guidance shows how to produce a short digital story to support autistic young people's transitions. A digital story is a short video (1-3 minutes) that shows typical behaviours for the young person. The stories are based mainly on **young person-led interests and exploration** rather than adult-directed prompts or staged activities.

How: 4 key steps

Step 1: Mapping

Create a mind map with the young person: what they like, enjoy, dislike, and the things they find more challenging. Talk to parents and adults to gather a range of views. If the young person is able to communicate their views, theirs should be the dominant voice.

Step 2: Filming

Using the ACoRNS digital stories "I am..." framework, plan where you will take your videos. The focus is on environments and activities that are meaningful for the young person. Once planned, take some video clips of the young person over a few weeks or months using small wearcams, a video camera, or a tablet PC. Store securely. The young persons can film this themselves and should be involved in planning what and where to film.

Step 3: Describing

Use the mind map and the video footage to describe the young person in short statements from their point of view based on the digital Stories 'I am...' framework. Again, this should be completed with the young person to ensure it is their voice being shared.

Step 4: Editing

With the young person use the 'I am...' descriptions to select video clips that best show the characteristics or behaviours of the young person. Try to present the views and perspective of the young person as meaningfully as possible.

Mapping: 7 areas to focus on

1. Spaces

Where does the young person like to be or explore?

Outdoor: the playing fields, playground, benches, going for walks.

Inside: at tables or on a sofa, or any young person-led activities, subject classrooms, library, specific staff members office.

2. People and interactions

How do young people like to spend their time and who do they interact with?

Young people will interact in different ways with staff and peers. They may also like to spend time by themselves. Interactions can be young person-led or adult-led.

3. Independence and agency

What does the young person choose to do for themselves?

This can include exploring, requesting, initiating, choosing, or deciding, acting upon an interest or desire.

4. Objects and interests

What is the young person really interested in and like doing?

Look out for preferred books, activities, use of school equipment, clothing, use of outdoor spaces, and the importance of touch or sensory stimulation and responses.

5. Communication and expression

In what ways does the young person express themselves?

This could be verbal or non-verbal and directed at the self or others.

6. Support

What behaviours show where the young person needs support?

Include some indication of the areas where the young person needs support to encourage their progression. For example, support with lesson transitions, unstructured time, social communication, learning aids.

7. Skills and capabilities

What is the young person good at?

There are many things that could be shown here e.g. art, sports, science, maths, humour, storytelling, specific subject interests, public speaking, helping others, computing, specific school subjects, external hobbies and extra-curricular activities.

Describing

Once you've created a mind map, you can create the young person's story. Consider which characteristics are most important to understand who the young person is, beyond the label of autism.

From these, you can create a story from the young person's perspective using some of the phrases below. We used five phrases for each story, but you can use as many as you feel are needed. You may not be able to show on video all of the 'I am...' statements. Ensure that the young person is included in writing their 'I am' statements so it is a true reflection of them.

For Example;

I am... Callum

I am a strong-willed and friendly boy. I say hello to people. I like football and eating pizza. I am good at running. I feel nervous when I have to walk in a busy corridor to my next lesson.

Example phrases to inform your ‘I am...’ stories

Below is an idea you can use to inform your story – it includes the kind of phrases that you could use to develop your own ‘I am... story’

- I am Noah and I am kind
- I like to play on the Xbox
- I want to get a new bedroom that’s a bit bigger
- I try really hard at swimming
- I hear jiggling key rings
- I see red noses
- I am good at football (kind of)
- I say I love my dog
- I feel afraid of new places
- I worry about being away from home
- I wonder what auntie Lola is doing now

Filming and Editing

Before you film...

Make sure you ask other members of staff whether they are happy to be filmed and get permission from the parents of all young people who might be filmed before you start.

Filming

You can take video footage using a wearcam or using a mobile, tablet or camera. We found the wearcams really useful for hearing the young person’s voice (giggling, humming, murmuring, talking) as well as seeing the world from their point of view. Ensure the young person has ample opportunity to do the filming themselves or set up the filming.

We highly recommend Ucam247 Wearcam Mini Wearable HD Video Cameras. You will also need a memory card. It’s best to try and keep clips short (30 secs – 2 mins), as this will make it easier to find the shots you want to include when editing.

Longer clips may also be too large to upload to web-based video editing platforms.

Store video footage securely, ideally on a password protected device.

Editing

You may find it useful to plan it out with the young person before you both try to edit together your footage.

For each sentence in the story, you will need to add a slide with the “I am” phrase followed by a clip or several clips to illustrate that phrase, much like the structure of a picture book.

With the young person plan by taking note of which files contain the shots you want to include for each “I am” phrase, and their approximate start and end times.

In some cases, you may want to increase the volume on individual clips to make sure that speech or other vocalisations are clearly audible.

Make sure you check the format of your video files. Some editing software may only accept files in certain formats, and you may need to convert your original files to a format compatible with your chosen editor.

Technical Stuff

We recommend using Adobe Premiere Clip for creating the videos using Android/iOS mobile devices or tablets, and Adobe Spark if you would prefer to use a desktop. Both programs are free, though you will need to create an account using an email address and secure password to use them.

Adobe Premiere Clip can be downloaded from iTunes or the Google Play store. For guidance on how to use Adobe Premiere Clip, please see: helpx.adobe.com/uk/mobile-apps/how-to/premiere-clip-create-edit-video.html

Adobe Spark is a web app which can be accessed through spark.adobe.com/sp/

For guidance on how to use Adobe Spark, please see: spark.adobe.com/page/JJcZ3JQWIPlc/

For a short video tutorial on how to make an ‘I am...’ story please go to our website: <https://autismtransitions.org/how-to-make-your-own/>