



# I AM... Digital Story Guides

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

## Why: it's child-centred



### Parents' views

*"There is too much pressure on the parents to have to try to explain what their child is like, because you can't explain in words a person, and watching the stories would almost fast forward that getting to know them time. They wouldn't have to spend two months getting to know that child"*

Anita, Oscar's Mum

## How: 4 key steps

### Step 1: Mapping

Create a mind map about the child: 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 child 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 child. Once planned, take some video clips of the child over a few weeks or months using small wearcams, a video camera, or a tablet PC. Store securely.

### Step 3: Describing

Use the mind map and the video footage to describe the child in short statements from their point of view based on the digital Stories 'I am...' framework.

### Step 4: Editing

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

## Why 'I am...' stories are important

*"They say a picture is worth a thousand words... It shows exactly what this child is about."*

Craig, Oliver's Dad

Transitions can be worrying for autistic children because changes in routine and getting to know new people and places can be challenging. One of the ways to help new people and settings understand how best to support the child is to know more about: who they

are, what they like, and how to motivate and interest them. The 'I am...' digital stories place the child's views at the centre and focus on who the child is, rather than assessing or describing what they can or cannot do.

## Find out more online

To view 'I am' video examples visit [autismtransitions.org/i-am/](https://autismtransitions.org/i-am/)





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## Mapping: what to include in the 'I am...' stories

A good place to start for your mind map is to think about what would make a good birthday present for the child?

Paula Kluth recommends that when discussing, thinking, or writing about an autistic child we should know enough about them to suggest an ideal birthday gift<sup>1</sup>. This knowledge can be used for teaching materials, supporting children's interests and motivation, and planning activities and lessons. Talking to other people, especially parents, can help you to add details from different perspectives. Here are some questions that are helpful to consider.



### Spaces

**Where does the child like to be or explore?**

Outdoor: the sandpit, mud kitchen, water play, gardens, forest school, painting, trampoline, climbing.

Inside: at tables or on a sofa, or any child-led activities.



### People and interactions

**How do children like to spend their time and who do they interact with?**

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



### Independence and agency

**What does the child choose to do for themselves?**

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



### Objects and interests

**What is the child really interested in and like doing?**

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



### Communication and expression

**In what ways does the child express themselves?**

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



### Support

**What behaviours show where the child needs support?**

Include some indication of the areas where the child needs support to encourage their progression.



### Skills and capabilities

**What is the child good at?**

There are many things that could be shown here e.g. cutting, threading, painting, pouring, making, counting, talking, sharing, running, bouncing, picking, throwing, climbing, initiating, responding, sitting, joining-in.

*"I think health professionals involved with the children should watch the stories before making assessments/reviews. This would certainly give a much better idea of what the child is like"*

Kristy, Henry's mum

<sup>1</sup> Kluth, P. (2010) (2nd Edition) You're going to love this kid! Paul H. Brookes Publishing: Baltimore, Maryland, USA.

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## Describing

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

From these, you can create a story from the child'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. These are story examples from the five children who took part in our project, and comments from their parents about why the stories mattered to them.

### I am... RILEY

I am a happy boy. I like painting, making mud pies and playing in the sand. I like trying lots of different things in a short time.



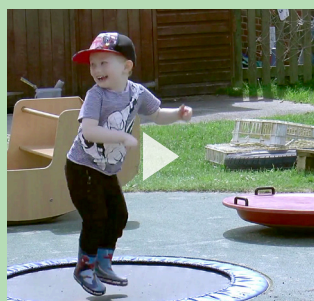
### I am... OSCAR

I am a spirited and quiet boy. I like sea creatures, the sandpit, bubbles and play-doh. I try new things, but feel frustrated when I'm interrupted.



### I am... OLIVER

I am an energetic and sociable boy. I like painting, the sandpit and the forest school. I'm having fun seeing myself in the mirror. I worry that people do not always understand me.



### I am... LUKE

I am a lovely and kind boy. I like other people singing for me. I am good at threading. I say to other people what I want, and like taking a nap.



### I am... HENRY

I am a strong-willed and friendly boy. I say hello to people. I like football and wiggly worms. I am good at running. I feel nervous with opening and closing doors.



### PARENTS

You can get to see the child from their point of view, and you can understand them better. You can't explain Oliver on a piece of paper. No one ever, ever understands.



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## 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 the computer

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 mummy

I FEEL afraid of the dark

I WORRY in the dark that monsters are real but I know they aren't

I WONDER what auntie Lola is doing now

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# I AM... Digital Story Guides

## Filming and Editing

### Before you film...

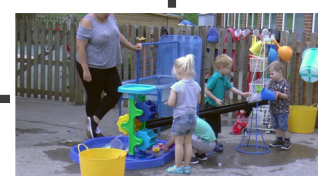
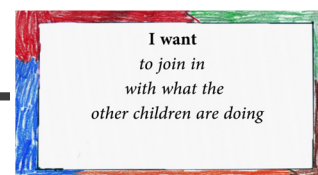
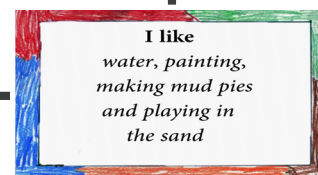
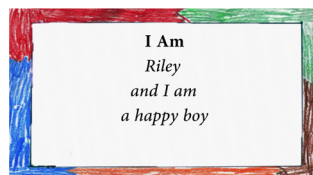
Make sure you ask other members of staff whether they are happy to be filmed, and get permission from the parents of all children who might be filmed before you start.

### 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 child's voice (giggling, humming, murmuring, talking) as well as seeing the world from their point of view.
- 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.

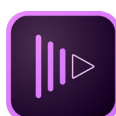
### Editing

- You may find it useful to plan it out before you 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.
- 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 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](https://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/](https://spark.adobe.com/sp/)

For guidance on how to use Adobe Spark, please see: [spark.adobe.com/page/JJcZ3JQW1JPlc/](https://spark.adobe.com/page/JJcZ3JQW1JPlc/)

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/>

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