

Helping Young Children Transition Between Activities

When thinking about transitions, caregivers might ask themselves questions such as:

1. How do I prepare children to move from one activity or setting to another?
2. Do I plan my daily schedule to include transition times and consider what the children and adults in the setting will do during these times?
3. What activities, such as singing, playing word or guessing games, reciting rhymes, or doing finger plays, can I do with the children in my care so the time passes more quickly as they wait for the bus to come, for other children to finish using the bathroom, etc.?
4. How do I meet the individual needs of children who might need more support or different types of support during transitions (e.g., using photos to help them anticipate what activity is next, directions given in a child's home language or sign language, an individual warning to a child that soon it will be time to clean up and begin a new activity)?
5. Do I have too many transitions between activities?
6. Do children become frustrated at not having enough time to finish a project or activity?
7. How do I help children become more independent across the year as they make transitions from one activity to another (e.g., gathering backpacks, putting on boots or picking up toys)?
8. Do I provide positive attention to the children following the transitions that go smoothly (such as times children pick up toys without prompting)?

Strategies that support smooth transitions between activities include:

- Verbal cues, such as verbal reminders before transitions (e.g., "five minutes before snack time," "it's almost time to clean up")
- Positive feedback after transitions (e.g., "Nicholas and Jorge did a great job cleaning up the block area and moving to the carpet.").
- Nonverbal cues (e.g., showing pictures of the next activity, ringing a bell) are also frequently used to help young children make smooth transitions.
- Letting children move individually from one area to another when they are ready rather than making children wait for the entire group to get ready.

(Excerpted from Ostrosky, M. M., Jung, E. Y., & Hemmeter, M. L., Center on the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning, *What Works Briefs 4: Helping Children Make Transitions Between Activities*)