

GROWING IDEAS

Daily Transitions – Time for a Change

What is meant by daily transitions?

Young children with and without disabilities experience many changes during their day. Daily transitions in early care and education programs take place during an activity, or when children move from one activity to another or one location to another. Transitions include the following:

- Arriving at or departing from a program.
- Exchanging toys.
- Entering or leaving a play area during free choice time.
- Cleaning up after morning activities and starting a group circle time.
- Getting dressed to go outside to play.
- Shifting from playing with friends to working with a teacher/therapist on a particular skill.



Why are carefully planned transitions important?

Thoughtful planning is needed so transitions can be positive and enjoyable learning experiences for every child and less stressful for adults. When planned, transitions provide predictability, help children feel safe and secure, and can reduce or prevent behavior problems. Each child is different, and the way any one child reacts to transitions may be influenced by a variety of factors. Careful planning helps all children.

Why might children feel confused, frustrated, or overwhelmed by transitions?

- Children's temperaments vary: all children can become very involved in what they are doing and not want to stop, or may not understand why they have to stop.
- Children's concept of time varies: they may not realize that when family members leave them in the morning, they will return. They may not understand what a verbal five-minute warning means.
- Children's abilities differ: Understanding and following directions, exercising self-control, having language skills to express needs, physically moving from one place to another, and/or handling noise or confusion all impact transition success.

Care and education professionals can support successful transitions by the following:

- Observe transitions to see how they are working for all children and adults and make adjustments, as needed.
- Review daily schedules: plan and prepare ahead of time.
- Consider each child's development, temperament, abilities, language and culture.
- Arrange the environment, curricula, and staffing to encourage independence.
- Make transitions a purposeful part of the curricula by providing learning opportunities in a variety of developmental areas.

Strategies for supporting young children during transition times:

Spend time observing, using these questions to guide your planning:

- How many transitions currently exist and how long do they take?
- Is the environment organized so every child can move easily from one area to another. Is it arranged and labeled so they know where things belong?
- Are children actively engaged during transition times or do they have to wait?
- Are directions offered clearly and calmly in ways all children can understand?
- Are various types of cueing systems such as music, songs, or visual schedule boards used to signal upcoming changes?

Schedule for successful transitions:

- Discuss the daily schedule using visuals with children at group times.
- Establish a regular routine and post a picture schedule to help all children know what to expect.
- Reduce the number of transitions and the amount of time children need to wait.
- Assign teacher responsibilities during transitions, as with other planned activities.
- Offer activities that can be completed quickly during short wait times, such as puzzles and books.

Consider each child's unique qualities:

- Recognize children's feelings when they have to stop playing. Involve them in making choices about how to preserve their work: photographing, drawing, or storing special constructions on a shelf.
- Use rituals to ease transitions: waving goodbye at the window, drawing a picture, or dictating a story for family members.

Some children and grown-ups handle change more easily than others. All children are different and you need to look at their personalities, ages, and experiences when you are considering how to help them make adjustments.

Child Care Aware (2008). Helping Children Make Changes: Big and Small (PDF). The Daily Parent, 34. Retrieved from <http://www.georgiadisaster.info/GeneralPublic/GPI1%20SupportingChildren/Transitions.pdf>

- Confer with families about their child's transition experiences and offer consistent responses that are developmentally and culturally appropriate.
- Tune in and help children succeed: offer a small squishy ball or other fidget toy to help a child attend while waiting.
- Provide directions using the child's method of communication (e.g. home language, sign language, photos etc.).

Create activity plans to help children learn to transition independently:

- Provide extra supports: invite a child to be a "helper" and set the table for snacks, pair up children of varying abilities, and/or make sure a caring adult is close by.
- Use puppets or social stories to act out, problem-solve, and model appropriate transition behaviors.
- Have children assess their own success during transition times to build awareness.
- Provide verbal cues to let children know what is coming next.

Make transitions educational and memorable!

- Support early literacy learning: keep songs, fingerplays, or poems handy using index cards on a ring for regular use.
- Engage imaginations and move: creep like mice or act out songs and stories.
- Plan playful games: pick a "cleanup card" out of a bag and put those toys away.
- Use children's interests to plan so they look forward to what happens next!

Where to learn more:

See "[Daily Transitions — Time for a Change — Selected Resources](http://ccids.umaine.edu/resources/ec-growingideas/transitionsres/)" at <http://ccids.umaine.edu/resources/ec-growingideas/transitionsres/>

See "[Daily Transitions — Time for a Change — Virtual Toolkit](http://ccids.umaine.edu/resources/ec-growingideas/transitionsvtk/)" at <http://ccids.umaine.edu/resources/ec-growingideas/transitionsvtk/>



Paul R. LePage, Governor

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<http://www.ccids.umaine.edu/resources/ec-growingideas>