

## What Is It?

Transitions are movements between activities. They can occur within the learning space, such as moving between centers or activities, or outside the learning space, when children move to different areas of a building or outdoor play. Intentionally planned transitions can be used to prepare children for changes throughout the day, increase predictability, and increase child awareness of classroom routines and expectations. When designed this way, transitions help maximize children's learning and play time, self-organization, and independence.

## When to Use It

Use transitions throughout the day:

- When moving from one activity to another.
- When moving from a primary learning space to another part of the building or outside.
- At the start and end of the school day.

## Steps to Implementation / How to Do It

<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Create a clear and consistent set of classroom routines (e.g., beginning of class, during circle time and centers, outdoor play, end of day).
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Create a visual schedule that details classroom activities and times (e.g., circle time from 10:00-10:20 a.m.). The visual can include pictures, words, clocks, etc. Notify children when a transition is about to occur (e.g., "1 more minute until we clean up and go to snack!"). All children should be notified of the upcoming transition, but some children may need an individual warning as well (e.g., "One more minute until clean up." "Jara, what happens in one more minute?").
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Use a consistent signal to indicate the transition (e.g., adult dims the classroom light or rings a soft bell and says, "Please clean up 3 toys and wash your hands for snack").
<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Provide children with reinforcement and positive descriptive feedback for engaging in expected behaviors related to the transition (e.g., cleaning up toys and washing hands).
<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Monitor the effectiveness of transition strategies by collecting data. Make transition adjustments based on the data.

### Example

Teacher LaShondra is finding that the young learners in her classroom have more difficulty with transitions than she was expecting. LaShondra recalls from last year that children also had trouble during transition times. While she suspects most children are just confused about what they are supposed to do, a few of them are engaged in challenging behaviors during transitions to avoid transitioning away from a preferred activity.

LaShondra decides to address transitions with the whole group. First, she determines expectations for transitions between classroom activities like free play and center time, and expectations for transitions outside of the classroom, when children are expected to calmly and quietly go outside for recess or to another room in the building. Next, she creates a visual poster of the transition expectations (e.g., clean-up 3 toys and then get in line by standing on the blue tape) and posts it on the classroom wall. Finally, she decides on a transition warning for the children: dimming the classroom lights and playing three notes on a xylophone.

LaShondra monitors the children's progress and notes that although her strategies are successful for most of the class, one child named Alex needs additional support. During transitions, she tells Alex how many minutes he has to complete the transition and shows him a visual timer. She combines this with a "first, then" strategy to increase the likelihood he will successfully transition by saying "When you put the books on the shelf and get in line by the time the timer goes off, then you get to be line leader!" After a few weeks, this individualized support helps Alex become as successful as his peers during transitions.

### How to Increase Effectiveness

- Keep classroom routines clear and expectations easy to follow.
- Keep transitions brief and consider removing unnecessary transitions.
- Frequently discuss and model transition expectations.
- Monitor child progress and adjust as needed.
- Partner children during transition times. Children who are more successful with transitions can be partnered with children that require additional support.
- Combine strategies in this guide with other positive behavior strategies, such as high-probability requests or group contingencies.

### Resources

Butler, A.M., & Ostrosky, M.M. (2018). [Reducing challenging behaviors during transitions: Strategies for early childhood educators to share with parents](#). *Young Children*, 73(4), 12-19.

Office of Head Start (2020). [Change doesn't have to be hard: Classroom transitions that support children](#).