

Supportive Transitions

What are supportive transitions?

A transition occurs when children move from one setting, activity, place, or person to another. Children make many transitions each day. Some common transitions include:

- going from home to school/childcare,
- from teacher to parents,
- from room to room (i.e., outside to inside),
- from activity to activity (i.e., play time to circle time) and
- during routines (i.e., washing hands before snack).

Why do some children find transitions difficult?

Change can be overwhelming and seem unpredictable for all children, especially when they are not ready to move on to the next place or activity. Some children may not notice that a transition is coming, they may have difficulty in understanding the verbal direction given, or they might not understand the timing or pacing of the transition.

Transitions can be confusing and frustrating for children because the “when and how” are usually decided by an adult. Children may express uncertainty when they feel that they are unable to have a choice in the transition or routine. This may include expressing their feelings through behavior that may be challenging to adults.

Why are supportive transitions important?

When you help children prepare for transitions, children can predict what is coming next. When you engage in supportive transitions, you are also helping children by:

- Nurturing their independence
- Engaging in positive relationships



Supportive Transitions

- Communicating that they are in a predictable, safe, and secure environment
- Developing confidence for success in future transitions
- Enhancing their learning
- Minimizing disruptions, dysregulation, or anxiety for either child or adult
- Reducing wait time by planning for children who finish an activity quickly
- Providing verbal transition warnings in advance of the change (individualize if necessary)
- Using short, positively stated directions
- Using nonverbal (visual or sound) cues before transitions
- Teaching children the expectations for transitions
- Providing positive, descriptive feedback after transitions

Educators can facilitate supportive transitions by:

Ensuring that routines are planned and practiced consistently. This involves:

- Minimizing transitions wherever possible
- Staggering transitions so not all children do the same thing at the same time
- Considering what children can do during the transition

For more information on Supportive Transition Strategies:

Six Strategies to Help Children Transition Through their day

<https://www.careforkids.com.au/child-care-provider-articles/article/363/six-strategies-to-help-children-transition-through-their-day>

Helping Children with Transitions

<https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Helping-Children-Transition.pdf>

ASaP Resources

- **Backpack Connection Series:** *How to Help Your Child Transition Smoothly* <https://www.kidsincluded.ca/product-page/backpack-series-how-to-help-your-child-transition-smoothly>
- **Visual Schedules** can support successful transitions by providing cues for children to indicate what comes next in daily activities. Check out this helpful template for visual routines (Visual Routines Template - preschool): <https://www.kidsincluded.ca/product-page/visual-routine-sample>