

Strategies for Helping Children Make Transitions

Classroom transitions occur when children move from one activity to another during the day. Transitions happen many times throughout the typical preschool day and children are expected to move to the next activity smoothly without complaint or confusion. When moving from one activity to another, children can become confused or bored and challenging behaviors can occur. Stressful transitions may occur before or after mealtime, moving between indoor and outdoor activities, moving between individual and group activities and getting ready for nap time. Below are examples of activities you could use to support smooth transitions.

Any Transition

Magic Mirror: Use your 'magic mirror' to catch children being good. This mirror can be an empty hand mirror frame or just a decorated shape cut out of cardboard. While looking through your 'mirror' comment on who is transitioning well. For example:

At circle you might say...

I am looking through my mirror and who do I see?

I see Erin looking at me. (...sitting for me.)

At nap you might say:

I am looking through my mirror and who do I see?

I see Kyndra napping for me.



Moving Between Indoor and Outdoor Activities



Line Up Feet: Have a set of differently colored feet on the floor for children in your class to stand on while lining up. Children can pull a colored foot out of a bag and find the matching feet to stand on.

Stop at the Door/Gate: Place a stop sign on the door and/or gate to indicate 'stop and wait.' You can also teach the children a chant to make lining up interactive and fun! Give three claps to cue children that the transition is coming. Use a chant such as: "1-2-3 look at me. Show me a line that's right on time. 1-2-3 it's time to leave. Waiting in a line that's mighty fine!" Repeat until all children are in line.

Moving Between Individual Activities

Five-Minute Glove: For smoother transitioning, you should give children a warning before the end of an activity. A prop such as a five-minute glove can be used to assist in this process. To make a five-minute glove you will need velcro, a garden/all-purpose glove, string, a picture of a clock and the numbers 1-5. Use velcro to attach the numbers and a length of string to each glove finger and the clock to the glove palm. As the minutes pass, remove one number (starting with 5) as you walk around the room so children know how many minutes are left before the transition. Teach your class how to use the five-minute glove during group time. You can add this task to your job chart so one child each day helps with this transition activity.



Nap Transitions



Follow the Light: At nap time you can guide children to their cot with a quiet activity of 'Follow the Light.' A decorated flashlight can be used for this transition activity to lead the way to each child's cot. Have the child 'follow the light, quiet as a mouse,' as you use a soft voice to lead the child to his/her mat or cot. Decorate with moons, stars, or anything to give a quiet time theme.

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Additional strategies can be found at <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/>