

Transitioning Time Activities

A Fun Learning Experience for Children in Early Childhood to Foundation Years

Transitions are a natural part of life. People are always moving from one place or one activity to another. Most young children need help making this journey! This practical guide will help early childhood staff make transitions fun and instructive by using them as “mini-teachings” for building language, literacy, maths, creative thinking and problem- solving skills.

Transitions Build Brains!

- Recent brain research supports what early childhood teachers have always known – “short and sweet” activities are easier for the brain to remember and understand than longer and more complicated ones!
- Three-minute warning transitions help the brain separate from one activity in order to get ready for the next.
- Surprise and novel transitions stimulate the brain to build connections between “known” and “unknown” content and help fix the information in the memory centres of the brain.
- Humorous transitions encourage laughter which studies have shown increase attentiveness to learning.
- Small motor transition games (such as finger plays) build the memory centres of the brain.
- Physically active transitions oxygenate the brain.



Communicating with Families

Transitions are a part of life whether children are transitioning from one activity to another, from home to day care, or from pre-school to foundation. Families are always dealing with transitions, both large and small. Parents and caregivers often appreciate suggestions for using transition activities at home, as many of the transitions strategies you use in your classroom will work successfully at home also. Consider creating a transitions newsletter for families. You can choose a theme such as mealtime, bedtime or clean-up time for each issue. Provide suggestions for transition games and activities. Invite families to share their favourite tricks too!



In fact, a child’s association with a particular song or rhyme often triggers appropriate behaviour at home. Periodically, share a current favourite transition song. Families particularly appreciate songs that promote clean-up, paying attention, sharing and getting ready to go out!

Developmental Considerations

3-4 year olds ...

- Enjoy simple “pretend” and movement games
- Respond quickly to familiar songs and rhymes
- Have short attention spans and do best with brief transitions
- Are building language skills by experimenting with silly sounds
- Need short and specific directions
- Understand picture cues better than verbal ones

4-5 year olds ...

- Can listen to and follow three-part directions
- Enjoy learning transition songs with many verses
- Create imaginary playmates
- Move from here to there with extra-large movements
- Have a hard time staying in one spot for very long
- Are developing socially to be able to share a transition with a partner

5-6 year olds ...

- Are dependent on authority
- Like to help and cooperate
- Appreciate class rules and structure, and use these in transitions
- Are responsive to approval
- Use creative thinking and problem-solving
- Enthusiastically participate in group singing and moving transitions
- Use developing listening skills to follow complex transition games and directions