

Helping Children Transition Between Activities

For some young children, moving from one activity to another (e.g., playing with toys to dinner time, playing outside to bath time, watching a movie to brushing teeth), results in confusion, frustration, or challenging behaviors. Adults can help children predict what is coming next which helps make transitions smoother.

Strategies to Support Transitions



Use a timer

(e.g., Show timer and say, "5 minutes of play and then dinner.").



Make the transition fun!

(e.g., If you need to leave the park, try these: "We can skip to the car.", or "Ride on daddy's shoulders to the car.").



Provide a verbal warning that one activity is going to end and another is going to begin (e.g., "We'll finish this book, then brush our teeth and go to bed.").



Sing a silly or familiar song; most children love music and songs. Use technology to help you get creative. Many personal devices and applications will play clean up songs (e.g., Alexa, Spotify, etc.) and YouTube has many transition songs and videos available for preschool children to help you!



Ask your child if they would like to bring a transition object or toy with them (e.g., "How about truck comes in the car with us? I bet he would live to sit next to your car seat!").



Use first/then language (e.g., "First clean up your dishes, then we can play blocks together." or "First wash your hair, then play in the bath.").



Give your child a job to do during the transition. Children like to be helpers! Your child can:

- put napkins on the table while you get ready for dinner;
- put all the shoes away when you get home; or
- be the "checker" who makes sure everyone has their backpacks before going to school.



Use visual supports.

- visual schedule
- first/then board
- cue cards



Download instructions and templates at:
https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Routine_cards_home.pdf