



Successful Transitions in Early Childhood

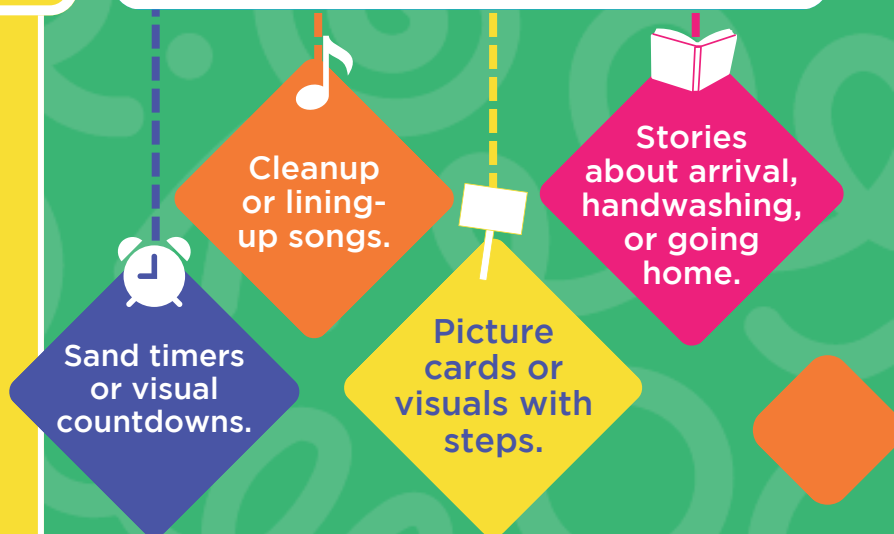
Transitions—whether moving between activities, spaces, or times of day—can be challenging for young children. Thoughtful planning and consistent strategies help children feel safe, supported, and ready to learn.



Why Do Transitions Matter?

- ✓ Transitions provide predictability and security in the daily routine
- ✓ Transitions help children build self-regulation skills, foster independence
- ✓ Transitions reduce challenging behaviors by setting clear expectations
- ✓ Transitions strengthen the connection between children, educators, and families

Common Transitions



Successful Transitions 101

Consistency:

Predictable routines reduce anxiety.

Visual supports:

Picture schedules and “Now/Next” boards provide clarity.

Clear expectations:

Use simple, positive language.

Model calm behavior:

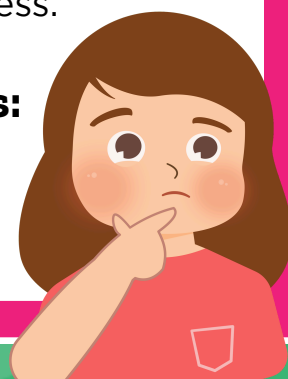
Children mirror adult tone and pace.

Build in buffer time:

Rushing often creates stress.

Acknowledge feelings:

Validate emotions during changes.



Transition tips by age group

0-18 months

- Use consistent cues (songs, words, gestures) before transitions.
- Maintain primary caregiver continuity when possible.
- Allow extra time; move at the child's pace.
- Offer comfort items (e.g., blanket, pacifier, caregiver's touch).
- Keep a "Transition Book Basket" near changing table, arrival/departure doors, circle areas, or cozy corners.

18-36 months

- Use visual and auditory cues (picture cards, bells, clapping).
- Offer choices when possible: "Do you want to hold the book or the block while we walk to circle time?"
- Engage them with small jobs (carrying a toy bin, turning off lights).
- Narrate what's happening: "First we clean up, then we wash hands."
- Keep a "Transition Book Basket" near changing table, arrival or departure doors, circle areas, or cozy corners.

3-5 years

- Provide a visual schedule and review it daily.
- Use transition songs, chants, or movement activities.
- Offer warnings and countdowns (e.g., "5 minutes until cleanup").
- Encourage children to help peers or take leadership roles.
- Use social stories to prepare for larger transitions (e.g., new classroom, arrival/departure).
- Keep a "Transition Book Basket" near arrival/departure doors, circle areas, or cozy corners.

"How can I involve families in supporting smoother transitions?"

Great question! Try sharing classroom routines with families so they can mirror them at home. Encourage parents to create goodbye rituals at drop-off. And make sure you're communicating changes to families to help ease those big transitions!

Let's pause + reflect!

- ? **How do I currently prepare children for transitions?**
- ? **Which children need extra support, and what helps them most?**
- ? **Am I building time for practice, patience, and flexibility?**