

Transitions at Home and Child Care

Adults know how difficult transitions can be: job changes, moves from one city to another, the birth of a new baby, the loss of a loved one. Even things as seemingly insignificant as returning from vacation and going back to work or switching from doing something enjoyable (e.g., reading a novel) to tackling a dreaded and despised household task are often difficult for adults. So it shouldn't be surprising that children, especially young children, also have difficulty handling transitions from one activity to another. How can we make the transitions easier and prevent the challenging behavior that often happens when children resist them?

At home

- Use a timer or familiar noise-maker to give advance warning.
- Give your child a familiar or special object or toy to take with them to the new activity or place.
- Create a visual schedule of the day—a list in order of pictures or drawings of the things you'll be doing.



- Give your child a job to do during the transition.
- Sing a silly song—“This is how we get in the car, get in the car, get in the car...”
- Give choices—“Do you want to brush your teeth before or after you take a bath?”
- Praise your child when they make a transition well, without fussing, arguing, or resisting.

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At Child Care

- Use visual or audio cues, like flashing the lights, playing music, singing a familiar song.
- When children need them, provide individualized attention and warnings about transitions.
- For activities like circle time, create a personalized space on the floor for each child.
- Include the time it takes to make transitions in the daily schedule so teachers and caregivers aren't frustrated because the transition takes so long that there isn't time for the next activity.
- Include simple activities during the transition itself, such as singing songs, playing guessing games, or reciting rhymes.
- Plan enough time to finish activities so children aren't frustrated that they can't finish what they started; on the other hand, don't allow so much time that children get bored or don't have anything to do.
- Give children as much independence as possible.

R E S O U R C E S

Transitions with Young Children. PA's Promise for Children.

<http://bit.ly/2kFFJEs>

Helping Children Make Transitions between Activities. CSEFEL.

<http://bit.ly/2ILI6pw>

How to Help Your Child Transition Smoothly Between Places and Activities.

Challenging Behavior. <http://bit.ly/2lzpyJk>

Terrific Transitions for the Preschool Classroom. Penny E. Warner, Ph.D.

<http://bit.ly/2ILJybs>

Programs and families can contact the program leadership directly at PAIECMH@pakeys.org with questions or concerns.

