

# PLANNING FOR SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS



A transition is the change or movement from one activity or space to the next activity or space. Transitions can be challenging for all children, but they can be especially difficult when you don't share a language with all the children in your care. If you were to take a step back and observe your program, you would find that transitions are often a source of behaviour disruptions. This is especially true when children don't understand why the change in activity is happening or what is likely to happen next.

Here are some suggestions to help you plan ahead, minimize disruptions, and create a safe, predictable program.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF ABOUT TRANSITIONS:

- Which transitions are important for the children?
- How many transitions are there each day?
- How much time is spent in transition?
- Is your schedule working well?
- Are transitions smooth and without disruptions?
- How much direction do you provide? Is it too little or too much?
- Is staff prepared and well organized?
- Do you have too many transitions? Are there any that you don't need?

After you've asked yourself these questions, evaluate what's working and eliminate what isn't!

## PLAN YOUR DAY STRATEGICALLY.

You can help to minimize many of the disruptions and behaviour challenges during transitions by simplifying your schedule. It's best to reduce the number of transitions and establish a regular and predictable schedule of activities that allows children to anticipate the events of the day. This will go a long way toward reducing children's anxiety.

# PLANNING FOR SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS

Here are some tips:

- Remember to leave plenty of unstructured “free play” time in your day.
- A schedule can be consistent without being inflexible. If there’s going to be a change in the routine, let children know ahead of time if possible.
- Consider how you might be able to minimize the number of large-group transitions. For example, could you have an open snack table rather than having all the children stop playing, wash their hands, eat and clean up at the same time?
- Plan carefully for each daily transition. Allow enough time so that no one needs to feel rushed. (Keep in mind that children with special needs may require more time to complete an activity and move on to the next.)
- Get to know the children in your care. Allow extra time or provide extra support where needed.
- Eliminate waiting by rotating children through situations that usually require it. For example, take children to the bathroom in small groups while the other children are still playing or tidying up.

## TAKE TIME TO PREPARE FOR TRANSITIONS.

Taking time to prepare children for transitions and making simple adjustments to your environment can help you to reduce frustrations for children and to manage transitions successfully.

Here are some tips:

- Make sure to have all the materials you need for the next activity prepared.
- Walk quietly through the room and tell the children the activity is about to change.
- Use verbal and non-verbal reminders to ensure that every child understands your message. For example, try using music and turning down the lights to signal that it’s time to tidy up, or use actions, facial expressions and gestures.
- Watch for children who routinely have difficulty during times of transition and try to involve them early in the task. Ask these children to be your assistants!
- Explain the routines to parents so that they can prepare their child and give them reminders.
- Make a visual schedule with pictures showing the activities that will happen that day and the sequence of these events.
- Use “first and then” messages. You can do this by using visuals and words to communicate what is happening now (first) and what will happen next (then). For example, you can say: “First we wash our hands; then we have snack.”
- If the child won’t have a choice, don’t give them one. Rather than saying, “Should we clean up the blocks now?” say, “Clean-up time. Please put the blocks away.”
- Be consistent. Use the same words each time you do a transition or routine.

Visit [cmascanada.ca](http://cmascanada.ca) for more resources to support your work with newcomer families



SUPPORTING THE SETTLEMENT OF YOUNG IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE CHILDREN / SOUTENIR L'ÉTABLISSEMENT DES JEUNES ENFANTS IMMIGRANTS ET RÉFUGIÉS  
Funded by: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada / Financé par : Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada