

Quick Reference Sheet: Managing Separations

10 STAGES TO SEPARATION

Here are some of the typical stages a child will go through before being ready to separate:

STAGE 1	Child has difficulty entering the playroom with the parent
STAGE 2	Parent holds the child and begins to encourage play in their arms
STAGE 3	Parent is able to have the child in their lap and the child will begin to play
STAGE 4	The child physically seeks the parent and holds onto their hand or seeks body contact
STAGE 5	The child is able to play with a caregiver nearby but doesn't play with the caregiver
STAGE 6	The child watches and occasionally is able to respond to caregiver
STAGE 7	The child begins to respond to the caregiver with smiles, vocalization or bringing toys
STAGE 8	The parent gradually interacts less with the child as the child begins to interact more with the caregiver
STAGE 9	The parent is able to sit in one reliable spot and the child begins to venture away from the parent for very short periods of time
STAGE 10	The periods of time for checking out where the parent is become longer

FIRST SEPARATION

You know the child and parent are ready when:

- The parent seems confident in the child's ability to separate and they seem ready to let go
- The child can play for at least 5 minutes without checking for their parent
- The child is able to engage in sustained play (they are not flitting and over-excited)
- The child initiates contact with the caregiver

STEP 1 The parent needs to say goodbye, explaining briefly where they are going, and they need to go fairly quickly. It is preferable to leave one of the child's toys and a photo of themselves or something of theirs (like a scarf) behind

STEP 2 Parent leaves and returns after 10 minutes. If violent reaction, no more separations tried that day. If a moderate reaction, another separation can be tried that day. If the separation went well, another separation can occur that is 20 minutes long

STEP 3 With every successful separation, the time away can be increased by 10 minutes until the child is able to cope without their parent for one hour. At this point, the parent may be able to attend class, at least part time.

Reference: Julie Dotsch

