



What to do When...

Helping a Child with Transitions

(“What to do When...” provides short term advice for teachers when they are confronted by common challenging situations. Refer to the Additional Resources to learn more about preventing and managing children’s challenging behavior.)

When a young child struggles with transition from one type of activity to another..

1. Prepare children to move from one activity or setting to another.
 - Provide verbal cues before transitions (e.g., “5 minutes ‘til snack,” “it’s almost clean-up time”).
 - Use nonverbal cues (e.g., showing pictures of the next activity, ringing a bell).
2. Plan your daily schedule to include transition times, and consider what the children and adults in the setting will do during these times.
 - Sing songs, play word or guessing games, recite rhymes, or do finger plays with children so that the time passes more quickly when they have to wait for long periods of time for new activities to begin.
 - Plan a gradual increase or decrease in the level of activity (e.g., outdoor play followed by snack) and a good balance of active and quiet play (e.g. center time followed by story time).
 - Limit transitions between activities.
 - Allow children adequate time to finish projects or activities.
3. Individualize transition strategies.
 - Provide support or different types of support to children during transitions (e.g., photos to help anticipate what activity is next, directions given in a child’s home language or sign language, an individual warning to a child that soon it will be time to clean up and begin a new activity).
4. Help children become more independent across the year as they make transitions from one activity to another.
 - Allow children to move individually from one area to another area when they complete an activity (e.g., as children finish snack, they are encouraged to go to the carpet and choose a book).
 - Teach children to help others (e.g., have children move as partners from one activity to another or ask one child to help another child gather his/her backpack).
 - Help children self-monitor during transitions (e.g., children can be asked to think about how quietly or quickly they moved from one activity to another).
5. Provide positive attention to the children following the transitions that go smoothly (e.g., the times that children pick up the toys without much prompting).
 - Give very specific positive feedback after transitions (e.g., “Nicholas and Jorge did a great job cleaning up the block area and moving to the carpet.”).

(These five steps are from **Brief 4** *Helping Children Make Transitions between Activities* by M. M. Ostrosky, E. Y. Jung, M. L. Hemmeter, on the website for the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning, under [Resources](#))

Additional Resources available online at www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel

What Works Briefs: Summaries of Effective Practices for Supporting Children's Social-Emotional Development and Preventing Challenging Behaviors. The Briefs describe practical strategies, provide references to more information about the practice, and include a one-page handout that highlights the major points of the Brief.

Brief 3

Helping Children Understand Routines and Classroom Schedules by M. M. Ostrosky, E. Y. Jung, M. L. Hemmeter, D. Thomas

[HTML](#) | [PDF](#) Handout: [HTML](#) | [PDF](#)

Brief 5

Using Classroom Activities and Routines as Opportunities to Support Peer Interaction by T. Bovey, P. Strain

[HTML](#) | [PDF](#) Handout: [HTML](#) | [PDF](#)

Brief 6

Using Environmental Strategies to Promote Positive Social Interactions by T. Bovey, P. Strain

[HTML](#) | [PDF](#) Handout: [HTML](#)

What Works Training Kits: Based on the What Works Briefs topics, short training packages are available that include PowerPoint slides with accompanying note pages, activities, and handouts, which provide a trainer with the materials needed to conduct a short staff development program on a focused topic.

Training Kit 3

Helping Children Understand Routines and Classroom Schedules by M. M. Ostrosky, E. Y. Jung, M. L. Hemmeter, D. Thomas

[PDF](#) | Handout: [PPT](#) | Presenter: [PPT](#)

Training Kit 4

Helping Children Make Transitions between Activities by M. M. Ostrosky, E. Y. Jung, M. L. Hemmeter

[PDF](#) | Handout: [PPT](#) | Presenter: [PPT](#)

Training Kit 5

Using Classroom Activities and Routines as Opportunities to Support Peer Interaction by T. Bovey, P. Strain

[PDF](#) | Handout: [PPT](#) | Presenter: [PPT](#)

Local Resources to contact online:

Region A Partnership for Children at www.regionakids.org, for a list of resources to promote social emotional competence and prevent challenging behavior in your county and in Region A.

