

Making Transition Times Fun



For some children, it can be difficult to stop what they are doing and move onto something else. This can be especially challenging if it is an activity that the child really enjoys.

There are many times throughout the day where children must stop, pack away, wash their hands, eat, go outside, come inside etc. Try to limit the number of transition times throughout the day. For example, it is much easier to use the bathroom on the way to lunch instead of starting lunch and then going back to the toilet.

These changes and interruptions can be overwhelming for a child and can often trigger some challenging behaviour. However, transitions are part of a child's daily routine, and are necessary to get to places like a doctor's appointment or to preschool. It is important to think ahead about ways to make these transition times less stressful for everyone.

Before you start

- **A note about routines** - Routine and predictability are important to children. Therefore, anything that takes them out of their routine can feel overwhelming. Children cope better when they are prepared and know what is coming. Think ahead and plan your day as much as possible. Do you have to be somewhere

at a set time? Consider working backwards and try to give yourself enough time for the transition to occur calmly and without being rushed. For example, if you are running late for an appointment, your child will notice your stress levels and anxiety. Aim to keep the daily routines and schedules as consistent as possible. A daily schedule with photos (below) or visuals on the fridge is a great idea. Refer to this throughout the day. You can add any pictures as necessary to indicate changes in the routine.

- **Expectations** - You know your child best. It is important to be aware if your child has not slept well or is unwell. They will need even more support and time to navigate transitions.
- **Give plenty of advanced warning** - Tell the child prior to the activity change to give them time to process and adjust, "Five more minutes (or "a little bit longer") until we pack away and go to Grandma's house." Use visual cues such as a timer on the iPad or phone. If your child uses some Key Word Signs, then indicate with a "Finished" action.

Wake up 	Go to toilet/ change nappy 	Eat breakfast 	Wash face 	Get dressed 	Pack bag 	Leave house 
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Transition time

- **Be a good role model** - Model what you are teaching your child and do the activity with them, telling them what you are doing. Children learn by watching others around them and how they behave.
- **Make it fun** - Countdowns like a rocket ship, “Time for bath when the rocket blasts off! 10,9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1”. Use a pack away song or music so your child knows what is expected. This is a cue for the change about to happen e.g., “Whistle while you work” (Snow White). Make up your own words to any tune your child likes, “Time for us to pack away...” or when their favourite song finishes. Use a musical instrument such as a triangle. Ask the child to jump somewhere e.g., Jump to the bathroom like a frog. Often a good motivator is to use a special toy or teddy bear to pretend to help pack away.
- **Communicate** - Communicate with your child what is happening and what is happening next. Acknowledge in child friendly language that it can be frustrating to do something you do not want to do and use this time to talk about emotions if relevant. You could use some visuals from your daily schedule chart, or you could create some more.
- **Choices** - Sometimes it can be helpful to offer choices, “in five minutes we will be packing away and getting ready for the park. You can choose to wear your green t- shirt or your yellow t-shirt.”
- **Special toy or object** - Your child may be more open to changing activities if they can take something with them like a special toy or object. This can then be used to turn the transition into a game, “Spiderman is helping to pack away too. Let’s take Spiderman in the car with us.” Remember that, for hygiene reasons, it’s a good idea to leave cuddly toys in a special place outside the bathroom to “wait” for your child to finish. Be prepared for the unexpected with some “surprise” items such as books or

toys when things don’t go to plan. You may find that you must wait longer than you thought or there is a longer queue at the supermarket.

- **Social stories** - A social story is a simple story with photos or drawings to help explain what is going to happen. There are several different apps available that can help create social stories with visuals and photos. Your Start Strong Pathways educator can help you to make a social story.
- **Sensory triggers** - Be aware of the surrounding noise and activity, e.g., you may be in a noisy shopping centre play area, and it will be harder for your child to process and follow your instructions. There are some noises and sounds that can be particularly upsetting for some children, e.g., a vacuum cleaner or balloons at a party. Again, this will make it more difficult for your child. Along with music as a cue for a transition change, you can also use the sense of smell. Maybe you could put a child safe essential oil in a spray bottle to indicate time for bath (follow correct medical advice).

After

- **Praise** - Acknowledge your child’s positive behaviour with specific praise, e.g., “Johnny, great job putting your Lego away and coming outside.” Remember, if things escalate and your child loses control, try to stay calm and give them time to re-settle, then try again.



Further Resources

Ask your Start Strong Pathways educator to help. They can help with making a visual schedule and supporting you with changes in routine.

Does your child have an Occupational Therapist? Let them know you are working on positive routine changes. Check in with them about some further strategies for your child or other resources.

Does your child have a Speech Pathologist? They can help you with visuals as well as other resources to engage your child during transition times.

Check out the links below for further ideas with music and books that might be helpful:

Music

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e7YPCIUtekw>
(Tidy Up Song, The Wiggles)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HT4uxtdTVoc>
(Pack Away Music)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oY-H2WGThc8>
(Clean Up Song)

Apps

<https://www.autismapps.org.au/>
(See reviews of different apps)

Books

- [Time To Tidy Up](#)
- [Time For Bed](#)
- The Wiggles: [Brush Your Teeth Sound Book](#)
- [Transitions in Children's Everyday Lives](#)
- [Helping Children with Autism Spectrum conditions through Everyday Transitions](#)

References

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism/therapies-guide/visual-supports>

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/preschoolers/behaviour/behaviour-management-tips-tools/activity-changes-behaviour-management>

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/autism/behaviour/understanding-behaviour/changing-routines-asd>

<https://www.lwtears.com/blog/transition-activities-for-preschoolers>

<https://childmind.org/article/how-can-we-help-kids-with-transitions/>

<https://www.careforkids.com.au/child-care-provider-articles/article/363/six-strategies-to-help-children-transition-through-their-day>

