

Predictability (Early Years)

The importance of predictability & supporting change

Many children benefit from safe, predictable environments and relationships to help them feel calm and able to learn. Within the early childhood setting these can include consistent routines, relationships, and responses to situations.

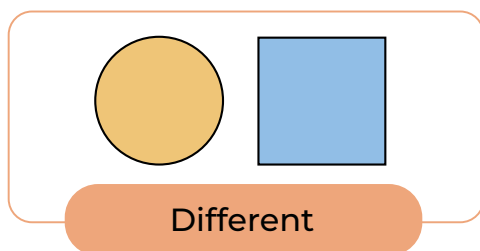
Research has shown a lack of predictability and change are the primary sources of anxiety in children. Autistic children may especially benefit from predictable routines and strategies that increase their understanding of what they are to do, what is coming next, and how long they are able to do something. Predictable routines are associated with improved regulation, independence, engagement, and social and behavioural development.

How can I create a safe, predictable learning environment?

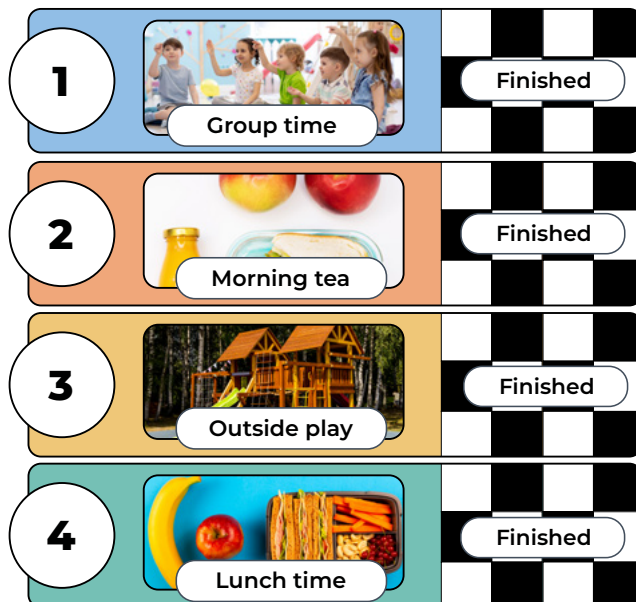
- Establish **regular routines** combined with the use of **visuals** and verbal instructions.
- Prepare children for **transitions and changes** in advance of them occurring.
- Prioritise **strong connections** between adults and children.
- Offer children **opportunities to co-regulate** with consistent adults.
- Value **children's agency** within the environment and children have opportunities to make **choices**, allowing them to have some control within routines and transitions.
- Consider how the **environment** can help a child know what is expected.
- Be aware of children's individual **learning preferences and individual processing** times, and they are supported within the context of routine.
- Develop **consistent approaches and language** used by all educators to support and guide children's learning and participation.

How can I support a change in my environment?

- Give children **time to adjust** to a planned change (e.g. *"Tomorrow we are going to eat outside"*).
- Use '**What To Expect**' stories: A story about the change in routine. This could be when you have staff going to be away on planned leave and provide information on who will be supporting them.
- Use **visuals** (e.g. the visual timetable could show a photo of the new eating area) or '**show, don't tell**' (e.g. adults can show children where the new eating area will be).
- Provide **individual support** (e.g. you might say *"Remember we are eating morning tea outside today"* to the child when they arrive).
- Use less words – **keep it simple!**
- Use a **child's interests** to guide transitions.
- Offer a **choice** (e.g. *"Could we put the bin here, or here?"*)
- Give specific **positive feedback**.
- Show a '**something is different**' visual.



Visual schedule



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