

# Transition Supports (Early Years)

Neurodivergent children may find it tricky to shift their attention from one task to another or to process changes in routine.

We refer to moments between activities as “*transitions*”, and transitions are a large part of every day in an early childhood setting.

There are 4 parts to transitions which help us to unpack the 'why'

1. Finishing the activity.
2. Adapting to the next activity.
3. Starting the next activity.
4. The structure of the transition.

To support the inclusive environment, visual supports can be used to show/illustrate transition times, and these can be beneficial for all children in your classroom.

Ways to support transitions using visuals:

## Visual schedules

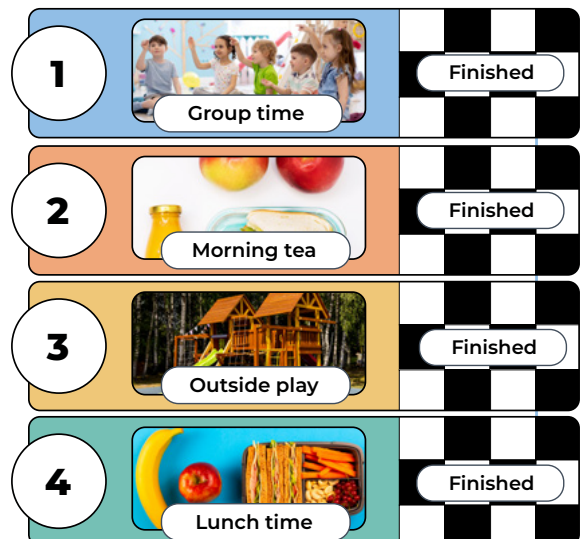
A visual schedule shows images of the activities planned for a specific time, part of the day, or the whole day (e.g. a morning session, or a specific activity such as group time).

A visual schedule can also show when activities have been completed (by moving images to a "finished" pocket/strip) and how many activities still remain. Visual schedules can be created using symbols, photos, pictures, and/or words.

### How long should a visual schedule be?

Some children may need to see the whole day represented on the schedule. By providing a clear structure of events it can help them know what is happening and reduce their anxiety.

For other children, it may be more beneficial to break the day up into different sessions, so the schedule is not too visually overwhelming.



### First/Then board

A 'First/Then board' is a two-step visual, showing a child what is currently happening and what is going to happen soon or next.

#### For example:

Now we are playing outside.  
Next we are going inside for inside play.

Other language such as 'This/Then' or 'Now/Next' can also be used to support.



### Lanyard visuals

Lanyard visuals can include images such as photos, symbols, or drawings of what will happen next. Showing an image to support a child to understand what you are asking them can help them to understand what is expected.

#### For example:

Showing an image of outside play when saying "it's time to go outside soon".



### What if I don't have a visual prepared?

Visual cues can take many forms. Whiteboards or paper can be used for a quick drawing of what is happening and may be beneficial if you do not have pre-prepared visuals. Naturalistic gestures can also provide children with additional visual information about a transition and a transition object (e.g. a maraca can support a child to prepare for the next activity such as music time).

### 5 ways to support transitions & prepare for an upcoming change:




- 1. Providing choice:** Children can feel empowered by being offered the opportunity to make choices during transition times. This also allows children to be active participants in transitions, rather than passive participants (e.g. "do you want to sit on the red chair or the blue chair for morning tea?")
- 2. Providing processing time:** Children may benefit from having time to process and respond to a request. It may help to wait 10 seconds before repeating a direction.
- 3. Following interests:** Children may benefit from being able to transition with a high interest object or moving their work to a safe place (e.g. an unfinished box/shelf). To make a transition fun you might 'hop like bunnies' or 'taking cars to the car wash'.
- 4. Alerting individuals and the group to upcoming change (transition cues and countdowns):** Adults can support children before a change by giving a 1-2 minute warning and using a 5,4,3,2,1 countdown. Predictable cues (e.g. a bell or song) can also support the transition process.
- 5. What-to-expect stories:** Individualised visual stories prepare a child for a specific situation (e.g. an upcoming visitor to the centre). These stories usually include photos or simple text and are written from the child's perspective with positive language about what to expect.



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