

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 four 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 Schedule

A visual schedule shows images of the activities planned for a specific time. It can also show activities for the whole (or part) of the day, for example a morning session or for a specific activity such as group time. A visual schedule can also show when activities have been completed and how many activities still remain. Images can be moved to a “finished” pocket or to a “finished strip”. Schedules can be created using symbols, photos, pictures and/or words.

How long should my 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. However, 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 transitions.

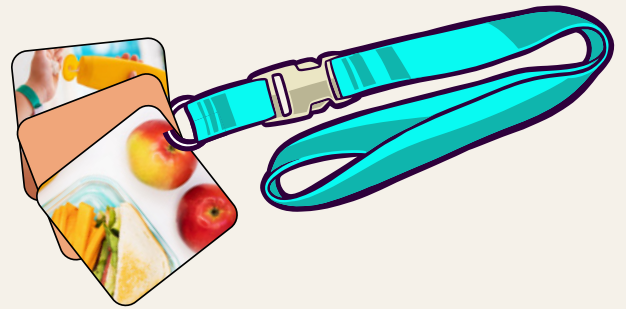
Example visual schedule:

1.	 Group time	 Finished
2.	 Morning tea	 Finished
3.	 Outside play	 Finished
4.	 Lunch	 Finished



### Lanyard Visual

Lanyard visuals can provide multimodal support when giving an instruction, and include images such as photos, symbols, or drawings of what will happen next. They can help to boost receptive language and decrease the opportunity for miscommunication.



### Whiteboards/Objects & Gestures

Whiteboards can be used for a quick drawing of what is happening and may be beneficial if you do not have pre-prepared visuals on hand. 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 through preparing for an upcoming change

### 1. Providing Choice

Children can feel empowered by being offered the opportunity to make choices for and during transition times. This also allows children to be active participants in transitions, rather than passive participants. For example, 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.

### 3. Following Interests

Children may benefit from being able to transition with a high interest object or can move their work to a safe place or an unfinished box/shelf.

### 4. Alerting individuals and group to upcoming change: Transition cues and countdowns.

Adults can support children before a change by giving a 1- or 2-minute warning and using a 5,4,3,2,1 countdown. Predictable cues, for example a bell or song, can also support the transition process.

### 5. What To Expect Stories

What To Expect stories are individualised stories prepared for a child for a specific situation, for example, an upcoming visitor to the centre. The stories will usually include photos and simple text and are written from the child's perspective with positive language about what to expect.

