

Transitioning Between Activities (Early Years)

Why can transitions be tricky for some children?

For some children, change can create feelings of insecurity. It is important to reflect on transitions and consider what strategies might support success for all children.

Supporting children across the four parts of a transition

We can support children to transition successfully by considering the four parts to a transition.

1. Finishing the first activity:

To support a child in finishing an activity, think about what warning you have provided them. Consider increasing predictability by giving advance warning of the transition. For example:

- Give a transition warning with a natural close (e.g. *"let's make one more sandcastle"*).
- Provide a verbal/visual countdown (e.g. *"blocks will finish in 5 minutes"*, followed by *"blocks will finish in 1 minute"*, followed by *"5,4,3,2,1 blocks finished"*).
- Use a transition cue such as ringing a bell or playing a set song.
- Some children may benefit from a pause sign or a 'finish later shelf/tray' so they know they can come back to their work later.



2. Adapting to the next activity

When transitioning, children need to stop thinking about the first activity and start thinking about the next. To better support a child adapting to the next activity, consider:

- Use of a visual cue such as First/Then Board or Visual Schedule (e.g. First: wash hands Then: lunch time).
- Show a photograph of the child at the next activity.
- Stories or video modelling can also be used to show examples of the transition.
- Use of a transition object that cues the child to the next activity (e.g. maracas for music time, carry the book for story time).
- Offering a choice to support active participation (e.g. a special object to carry).
- Use consistent words/phrases to mark the transition (e.g. “*music time*”).

3. Starting the next activity

For some children, they need support to start the next activity. Examples of how to support a child starting the next activity may include:

- Checking that the child knows exactly what they need to do.
- Considering if the environment supports their preferences. (e.g. seating, noise).
- Use of stories, video models or peer models to show how to start an activity.
- Using visual supports to support a child to see what the activity involves.




4. Structure during the transition

Sometimes during a transition, there is a period of unstructured time as children pack up and move onto the next activity. It can be busy and noisy, and children may move in and out of each other's personal space. There may also be a period of waiting involved. Support during this time can be provided in a number of different ways. For example:

- Trial the use of headphones if high noise levels are tricky for a child.
- Offer the use of a fidget toy or objects of interest.
- Explore a waiting bag of activities.
- Transition a child before or after other children to avoid the rush.

Autism Queensland is here to help—get in touch to learn more:



 **Email:** css@autismqld.com.au
 **Phone:** (07) 3273 0000
 **Website:** autismqld.com.au



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