

Transitions for Young Children

There are so many fun ways to help younger children transition between tasks! We have compiled a list of some of our favorites below. Remember, not all transitions work for all groups of children. What works with one group, may not work with another. We believe that it is a good idea to have a few favorite transitions so that when one is no longer effective, you have a couple of back-ups to test.



Call & Response

Call and response sayings can be favorites of young children. For example, many teachers say, "1-2-3, eyes on me," the children then respond with, "1-2, eyes on you!" You can create your own call and response that fits your children. We know one teacher who has a pet bearded dragon named Chico. She says "Chico, Chico, Chico!" The students respond with "Crickets, crickets, crickets!" We've worked with another teacher who asks "All set?" The students respond with "You bet, no sweat!" A favorite of kid's I've watched is "Alright, alright, alright!" The students respond with "Okay, okay, okay!"



Adapt Songs

Many words to popular children's songs can quickly be changed to fit a direction you need to give. For example, using the tune of "If You're Happy and You Know It", you might change the words. Here are a few examples using this tune:



- "If you're ready for a story, find a seat! (clap, clap) . If you're ready for a story, find a seat! (clap, clap). If you're ready for a story, if you're ready for a story, if you're ready for a story, find a seat! (clap, clap)."
- "If you're ready for the lesson, voices off! (clap, clap). If you're ready for the lesson, voices off! (clap, clap). If you're ready for the lesson, and you're going to do your best then, if you're ready for the lesson, voices off! (clap, clap)."
- "If you're ready to go walking, check your feet! (clap, clap). If you're ready to go walking, check your feet! (clap, clap). If you're ready to go walking, then your mouth...it isn't talking, if you're ready to go walking, check your feet! (clap, clap)"
- "If you're ready to actively listen, show me how! (clap, clap). If you're ready to actively listen, show me how! (clap, clap). If you're ready to actively listen, then we'll start with something fun! If you're ready to actively listen, show me how! (clap, clap)" You can have students put their hands up by their ears on the "show me how" portion of the song, or come up with something more creative using sign language.

Some other popular tunes might be Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star or The Farmer in the Dell. Be creative with your tunes and your words.

Magic

Okay, so it's not real magic, but toddlers love to pretend something magical is happening! Fill a spray bottle with water and add a label that says "magic mist."



Explain to children that when you spray the class with the mist, they will all become quiet and show you they are ready to listen. Perfect to prepare students for a story! If you don't mind a little glitter, you could also sprinkle kids with a small amount instead of using the mist. We would save the glitter for only very special occasions!

Cleaning Up

Most preschool children know the "standard" clean up song, but we're sure that preschool teachers would like to add a few more clean up tricks to their tool belt! Gather students together and tell them that you are going to use STRONG muscles to clean up the room. Students practice flexing their muscles and then continue building their muscles by picking up.

Human Vacuums - Another idea is to have students become vacuums. Have children hold out their arms like a vacuum hose and make vacuum noises as they pick up.

Time Challenge - Even young children like a challenge. Set a timer and challenge children to clean up the room before the timer goes off. Or, play a song and challenge students to complete pick-up by the end of the song.

What's In My Sack?

Have a special, colorful bag that contains a special object related to the next task. Have students gather together on the carpet. Students then ask questions and make guesses to solve the mystery of what they'll be doing next. There's no better way to spark interest and get kids ready to learn!



Colorful Cloth

This is a simple game children love. Create or buy a small, colorful piece of cloth (about 12" x 12".) After gathering students together, throw the cloth into the air. Children clap loudly and stomp their feet as the cloth falls to the ground. As soon as it touches the ground, everyone must freeze and be silent.

What Hat Am I Wearing?

Have a different hat for each classroom activity. When you change your hat, it is a signal for students that it is time for something new.

Get Your Wiggles Out

This isn't really a transition, just a break for when your lesson or story is not going how you planned! When kids are antsy and not as focused as you would like, stand up and have the children "get their wiggles out!"

Choo Choo Train

What toddler doesn't love trains?! Put on a conductor's hat and become the conductor. Begin by chugging around the room as you say "Get on board the train!" You might even use a train whistle. As you move around the room, children join the train. Lead the train to where you are meeting. Children soon begin to realize that as soon as you put on the conductor's hat, they will be transitioning to a new activity!

Moving Between Spaces

When you're moving between rooms or spaces within a room, adding fun movement can really help engage younger children! Preschoolers like to pretend and this is a perfect opportunity to let them use their imaginations! We like the idea of having students pretend to be birds and fly. Or, have students move like a skater or tiptoe to their spots.

Simon Says

Play this game to get students listening. The minute you say "Simon says", they will perk up to listen. Start by playing the game to get them into a line or wherever you need them to be. Once there, play the game for a few more minutes having them do different things with their hands (on their head, on their shoulders, covering their mouths, etc). The last "Simon says" can be something like "Simon says...if you're ready for our center time, show me by sitting criss-cross applesauce and by putting your finger on your mouth"!