Ten Tips for Smooth Transitions

Planning for smooth transitions will benefit both teachers and children. Children will stay focused, teachers will remain calm, and the time between activities will be used to good advantage.

**Tip #1** Plan carefully for each daily transition. Allow plenty of time in the schedule for the flow of action to begin and end.

**Tip #2** Control yourself first and children will stay in control. Keep a calm voice and manner. Speak softly and move in an unhurried way to communicate to children that this is an orderly process.

**Tip #3** Prepare the children and the environment. Make sure the materials and equipment you need for the next activity are available and ready for use. Walk quietly through the room to warn children that the change in activity is coming up.

**Tip #4** Remind and inform the children so that they know what is happening now and what will happen next. For example, “We’re going to clean up so we can go outside to the playground.”

**Tip #5** Eliminate waiting. Begin with a small group of three or four children and send them to the bathroom, while others are still playing.

**Tip #6** Explain changes. When the routine will be different, prepare the children ahead of time, if possible. If not, tell them at the beginning of the transition what will be different.

**Tip #7** Involve children easily and early. At morning group time, ask for volunteers to help with specific jobs. Using a job chart that children can manage by themselves is a great visual tool to have in the classroom.
Tip #8 Target children who need help. Watch for children who have difficulty when routines are broken and who seem uneasy or anxious with a great deal of activity going on all at once. Involving them early with a specific task or asking them to be your helpers are good techniques that will help them stay focused.

Tip #9 Dismiss the children in small groups. When a large group is breaking up to move on to other activities, send children off a few at a time. Washing hands, getting a drink of water from the fountain, and using the bathroom are all good examples of times when this will be beneficial.

Tip #10 Promote self-direction and self-control. Create an atmosphere where mutual acceptance and responsibility for group living is a clear value. Eliminate those parts of the transition process that require children to sit, stand, or wait for the next activity for too long.

Gorden A. & Browne, K.W. Guiding Young Children in a Diverse Society (1996), P.89-90