

Helping your child change activities

1 Preparing for Transitions

- As much as possible follow a consistent and predictable routine. For example, ensure that naptime, mealtime and bedtime happen around the same time everyday.
- Routines make changing activities easier because then your child will know what to expect.
- Let your child know what is going to happen during the day.
 - ♦ Tell the child what is generally going to happen that day. For example, *After lunch today we are going to go to grandma's house.*
 - ♦ Show the child a picture or an object of what is going to happen next. For example, show them their toothbrush when it is time to brush their teeth.
- Use gestures, songs, a timer or a bell to let your child know something is going to change.
- When possible, wait until your child is finished what they are doing or there is a natural break, before moving on to the next activity.
- Prepare your child that a change is coming. For example, *Three more slides, one more minute or one song before we wash our hands.*
- Give your child something to look forward to. For example, *When we get home we will read a book.*



2 During the Transition

- If your child is having difficulty with a transition:
 - ♦ Empathize: Let your child know what you think they are feeling. For example, *I know you're frustrated. You don't want to leave but it is time to go.*
- Help your child feel more in control of the change by offering choices. For example: when it is time to leave, *Do you want me to put on your coat or do you want to do it?* or When it is time to clean up, *Do you want to clean up the blocks or the cars?*
- Use praise and encouragement along the way. For example, *I like how you came and got your boots on!*
- Join your child in the transition. For example, pick up the toys together.
- Let your children participate in the next activity. For example, when preparing for mealtime, have your child put the napkins on the table.
- Allow your child to take a favourite object or toy to the next activity. You may want to encourage the use of a transitional toy or object. For example, a stuffed animal or a blanket.
- Use songs and singing as a calming strategy for both you and your child.
- If these strategies do not work, get through the transition as quickly and calmly as possible.



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3 After the Transition

- Celebrate your child's success! For example, *Good job!*
- Think about what went well, and how it might go better the next time.

Remember

- Keep a sense of humor.
- It is common to have difficulty leaving an activity.
- It is a normal part of development for children to be upset when leaving an activity they enjoy.
- Depending on a child's temperament, some children may have more difficulty than others.
- Put yourself in your child's shoes and think of how you would feel if you were made to stop your activity.
- You are not alone. Many families struggle with transitions. Talk to someone.

Further Reading

<http://www.capitalhealth.ca/nr/default.asp>

<http://www.investinkids.ca>

