

*Transition times, the periods of time spent moving from one activity to another, can be particularly stressful and difficult for children. An important task for the child care professional is to effectively assist children to navigate through the transitional maze without becoming confused, bored, or frustrated. The following strategies will aid in preparing for smooth transitions.*

### **Waiting**

When children are expected to wait to move to the next activity, keep something handy for them to do while waiting.

- Placemat Puzzles – Purchase inexpensive placemats with pictures. Cut the placemats up into puzzle-like pieces. Store different puzzles in individual large Ziploc bags.
- Sand Search Bottles – Fill clear 20 oz. plastic bottles almost completely with sand. Put small objects in the sand (penny, paper clip, eraser, bead, etc.) Secure the lid with tape. Children can search while they are waiting.

### **Settling into Circle Time**

As children join circle time, have a surprise box to get their attention.

- Decorate a shoebox, canvas bag, or plastic container so that it is attractive to children (colorful, sequins/jewels, etc.)
- Put something new in the box/bag. It could be something that introduces a new theme, or just something else that might be interesting to children.
- Allow the children to ask questions regarding the contents. You can give hints as the children attempt to figure out what is in the surprise box.

### **Stretching**

If children are expected to stay focused on a specific task or provider directed activity for more than a few minutes, allow them time to stretch their bodies.

- Collect plastic eggs.
- Write some movements on strips of paper (“5 Jumping Jacks,” “10 Sit Ups,” etc.)
- Fold the paper up and put one in each of several eggs.
- When the children begin to squirm and they need to move, have them pull out an egg, open it up, and follow the directions.

### **Clean Up Time**

When it is time to clean up, give the children a little something extra to help them clean – Magic Pick Up Lotion.

- Use any kind of mild hand lotion (be sure to check for allergies and sensitive skin before using on children).
- Create a label using construction paper to cover the existing label or decorate a plain bottle from which the label has been removed. Include the words “Magic Pick Up Lotion.” on the new label.
- When it is clean up time, pull out the lotion and give children the magic they need to “pick up.”

#### References

*Transition Tips and Tricks for Teachers* by Dr. Jean Feldman, 2000

*Transition Magician* by Nola Larson, Mary Henthorne, and Barbara Plum, 1994

*Transition Magician 2* by Nola Larson, Mary Henthorne, and Ruth Chvojicek, 2000

*Transition times, the periods of time spent moving from one activity to another, can be stressful for the child care professional and the children in her/his care. Without proper preparation transitions can become chaotic, with children lacking needed direction and the provider feeling overwhelmed and frustrated. However, transitions can not only be smooth, they can reinforce learning. The following tips will help make transition times a productive part of your day.*

- Plan transition activities each day, just as you plan other lessons. (How will you dismiss children from circle time? What song will you sing while children are washing their hands? etc.)
- Use transition times as teaching opportunities. Choose transition activities that reinforce skills and concepts. For example, if you are working on shapes, sing a song about shapes while children are waiting in line or ask children to find different shapes in the room while other children are finishing up the last activity and rejoining the group.
- Have all materials for daily activities and the environment ready so that transition times are not used for preparation.
- Reduce the total number of whole group transitions during the day. (Transition small groups of children and eliminate unnecessary transitions).
- Give children warnings before transitions. (Walk around to children individually or in small groups rather than flashing lights or speaking loudly to the whole group.)
- “Talk up” the next activity to get children excited and motivated to move on.
- If children must wait, give them a job or task. (Help set the table, hold the clipboard, or look for letters around the room.)
- Give clear, simple directions regarding transition times.
- If you have more than one adult in your classroom/program, use the throw and catch model. Have one adult dismissing or directing children away from the old activity (throwing) and have the other adult “catching” the children in order to get them involved in the new activity.
- For children who have difficulty during transitions or are younger/less mature, give individual support and extra warning, as well as reinforcing touch and physical guidance during transitions.
- Develop a “bag of tricks” or “buffer activities” that can be used to keep children occupied while they wait. Keep these in a convenient, easily accessible location.

#### References

- Transition Magician* by Nola Larson, Mary Henthorne, and Barbara Plum, 1994.  
*Transition Magician 2* by Nola Larson, Mary Henthorne, and Ruth Chvojicek, 2000.  
*Transition Tips and Tricks for Teachers* by Dr. Jean Feldman, 2000.  
*A Guidance Approach for the Encouraging Classroom* by Daniel Gartrell, 2003.  
*The Creative Curriculum for Preschool* by Diane Trister Dodge, Laura Colker, and Cate Heroman, 2002.