Transition Tips & Tricks

Transition Tips

1. Remember - there is no one right way to carry out transition time.
   - There are many ways to make things easier and more pleasant, depending upon your situation. Experiment!
   - Try tying in your transitions to the theme or concept of the week (if you are learning about snow, transition to lunch like snowflakes!).

2. Keep MOVE-ing Forward! (Lentini, Anderson & Taccetta; University of South Florida)
   - M – model & verbally cue for success
     ✓ Teach expectations - make sure children know the routine.
       • Teach children expectations of transitions.
       • Follow routine long enough so that children are familiar with it and know what they are supposed to do.
       • Talk to children about what is happening next, especially if there is a change in the routine.
     ✓ Give a 5-minute warning about the transition.
       • Help the children finish activities by alerting them to reasons for change.
       • Respect the children’s time and work by giving opportunities to finish work later on or to repeat an activity.
   - O – organize and prepare ahead of time to reduce waiting
     ✓ Plan ahead - think through transition times and problem-solve what might go wrong. Be preventive!
       • Be sure the daily routine has a minimum of major transitions.
       • Many transitions are unavoidable, but there might be some you could change which would make the day a little easier.
       • Designate meeting places for major transition times so that children know where to go next.
       • Have a “bag of tricks” ready for when schedule changes occur or do not go as planned – books, songs, or finger plays that will engage children.
     ✓ Keep transitions as short as possible.
       • Begin activities without long, initial waiting periods.
       • Have your materials ready or let children help you prepare the activity.
   - V – visual strategies clarify routines and changes
     ✓ Post visual reminders of behavior expectations during transition times.
   - E – excite and engage children in transitions
     ✓ Turn transitions into games.
       • Use make-believe as a means of dealing with transitions and periods of waiting. When absorbed in make-believe, time passes rapidly for children.
       • Finger plays are great at any time of the day to get wiggles out and to release pent-up energy, and to keep children active and interested while waiting.
**Transition Tricks**

**Arrival Transitions** (Lentini, Anderson & Taccetta; University of South Florida)

1. A Greeting Choice (Transition Magician 2, Henthorne, Larson, & Chvojicek): As children arrive, give them a choice of how they would like to be greeted. They could choose from pictures of: a high five, smile, hug, or hand shake. These pictures could be on the floor and they stand on their choice. (You can repeat this in circle so that friends can “greet” each other.)

2. Check In Chart: Children can move a picture (photo, symbol, and/or name) from their “home” to “school”.

3. Feeling Chart Check-in: Using “feeling pictures” to create a variety of feeling faces children may experience as they arrive. Place a photo of each child on a clothespin. Children identify how they are feeling as they check in clipping their photo with the corresponding feeling.

4. Arrival Mini Schedule: Print, assemble, and sequence the visual mini-schedule. The arrival mini schedule can be used to prompt children as to the steps in the arrival routine. Once taught, this will help them self initiate the routine steps. For example: First, sign in; Second, put belongings in your cubby; Third, say good morning to your teacher; Fourth, play with a table toy.

**Cleaning Transitions**

5. Music Race: Tell children they are racing against the music. See if they can finish cleaning up and be sitting on the rug by the end of the song. (Be sure to select a song that is long enough for children to successfully clean up.)

6. Freeze Clean: Play a song as children clean up from an activity of play time. Throughout the song, stop the music and have everyone freeze. While everyone is frozen, look around to see what needs to be picked up. Announce areas that still need attention. Restart the music to finish cleaning up. (Alternative, children clean when lights are on and freeze when the lights are off.)

7. Clean Up Song: Sing “Who is going to pick up blocks, pick up blocks, pick up blocks? Who is going to pick up blocks and be a classroom helper?” Repeat the song with a child’s name in place “Sally is picking up blocks, picking up blocks, picking up blocks. Sally is picking up blocks to be a classroom helper!”

8. Traffic Light Warning: Make a traffic light out of cardboard or construction paper. Hang it on the wall during play time. Have the green light showing during play time. When only 5 minutes are left in play time, give a verbal warning and put up the yellow light. When it is time for clean up, put up the red circle and announce clean up time.

9. Vacuum: Ask children to turn themselves into vacuum cleaners. Put out your arms and make vacuum cleaner sound effects while the hoses (arms) are picking up all the toys and putting them away.

10. Timer: After verbal 5 minute warning, set a timer. When the timer goes off, it is clean up time.

11. Clean Up Helper: Choose one child to be a clean up helper. It is their job to go from center to center and tell the students it is time to clean up.

12. Go Shopping: Give each of the children a grocery bag. Tell them they are going shopping but can only buy the toys that are on the floor or table. They can “shop” until all the toys are gone. Then they take the toys back to their homes (the centers they belong in) and put them away – just like Mom & Dad do with the groceries they bring home.

13. Five Minute Glove Person (Transition Tips and Tricks, by Jean Feldman - Pg. 50): Have one child helper be the “5 more minutes” person and have them announce to the class by walking around and saying “5 more minutes” while holding up the 5 minutes glove. After 5 minutes, use some sort of auditory or visual cue along with announcing that it’s time to clean-up. This can be the same child’s job or another’s. There can also be a 5 Minute person on the playground.
14. Beat the Clock: Set a timer, preferably one that has a quicker beat towards the end of the time. Have the children clean up the room as fast as they can, reminding them to do it in a carefully way. Make a poster board in the beginning of the year and record all the times. Let them see how much they have improved over the year. You could make a “goal” for them to reach with a promise of a “Special Day” when they reach it!

15. Twinkle Clean-up Song (Transition Tips and Tricks, by Jean Feldman - pg. 51):
   To the tune of “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star”
   Twinkle, twinkle little star,
   Stop and clean-up where you are.
   Time to put the toys away,
   We’ll get them out another day.
   Twinkle, twinkle little star,
   Stop and clean-up where you are.

   To get the attention of children who are not cleaning, insert their name into the song: Twinkle, twinkle little Brendan, stop and clean up where you are.

16. Ready-Set-Clean (Teachable Transitions, by Rae Pica)
   (This is a call and response method of getting children ready to clean)
   Ready...who’s ready?
   (Children respond: I am)
   Set...who’s set?
   (Children respond: I am)
   Ready – Set – Clean!

17. A Flick of the Lights (Teachable Transitions, by Rae Pica)
   (This chant can be used in conjunction with a magic wand and you can explain that you are turning them into magic elves that make the room look all clean and shiny and new.)
   A flick of the lights,
   A clap of my hands,
   Means cleanup time
   Throughout the land.

18. Freeze, Shake, and Clean (Teachable Transitions, by Rae Pica)
   (A fun and silly way to get kids involved in cleaning.)
   Say: Freeze
   The children then freeze where they are.
   Then say: Shake
   The children (and you) shake your body.
   Finally say: Clean!

19. Hi-Ho (Teachable Transitions, by Rae Pica)
   Hi-ho, hi-ho
   It’s off to clean we go.
   We’ll clean up high
   And clean down low,
   Hi-ho, hi-ho, hi-ho, hi-ho!
Transitions between Locations

20. Have children pretend to be various types of **animals** as they move from one area to another.
   - Fly like a butterfly from circle time to snack.
   - Hop like a rabbit to centers.
   - Wriggle like a worm to recess line up.

21. Have children pretend to be various types of **professionals** as they move from one area to another.
   - Dance like a ballerina on your tip-toes to the bathroom.
   - Walk like a fireman to art.
   - Ride like a cowboy to centers.

22. Have children pretend to be various types of **athletes** as they move from one area to another.
   - Dribble like a basketball player.
   - Slide like an ice skater.
   - Jump like a long-jumper.

Transitions to Line Up

23. **Beanbag Line Up:** A way to stay! (by Rachel Lee Anderson)
   - While your students are in line waiting for the rest of their classmates to line up, having a quite game to play for them will help keep your carefully planned line in shape!
   - Make a beanbag and give it to the first person in line. Have them hand it to the person behind them anyway they can think of, like over their shoulder, under their legs, around their waist.
   - Make sure you clearly state the rules of the game: Only two people can move at a time, no one can talk, and if it drops you have to bring it to the front and start all over.
   - This will help occupy the students while you finish your line up.

24. **Who’s Ready to Go?** (Teachable Transitions, by Rae Pica – pg. 78)
   (Teach this call out response to make line-up a bit more interactive)
   Teacher: Who’s ready to go?
   Children: We’re ready to go!
   Teacher: Are you sure you’re ready to go?
   Children: We’re sure we’re ready to go!
   Teacher: Show me you’re ready to go?
   Children: We’ll show you that now we’re ready to go! (and they will)

25. **1-2-3** (Teachable Transitions, by Rae Pica – pg. 78-79)
   (Use a cue like light out or three claps to cue children that the transition is coming)
   1-2-3
   Look at me.
   Show me a line
   That’s straight and fine!
   1-2-3
   It’s time to leave.
   You should be waiting in line
   With a nice straight spine.
Transitions between Activities

26. Put each child’s name and picture on a large index card. As you hold up each card, that child transitions to the next activity.

27. Sing “Who’s lining up to go to (insert activity name)?” (To the tune of “Who Stole the Cookies from the Cookie Jar?”)
   - Pick children who are meeting the behavior expectations for transition and insert their names. “Jesse’s lining up to wash his hands.”
   - Let the child help finish the song, “Who me?”
   - The whole class can reply “Yes you!”
   - (Child) “Yipee!”
   - (Whole Class) “Good for You!”
   - Move on to the next child who is meeting expectations.

28. Sing “If you’re ready and you know it” (To the tune of “If You’re Happy and You Know It”)
   - Complete the song with the behavior expectations
   - Example – from clean up to story time
     - If you’re ready for a story find your seat. If you’re ready for a story find your seat. If you’re ready for a story, check your hands and then your feet; if you’re ready for a story find your seat!

29. Sing “Do you know what time it is?” (To the tune of “Muffin Man”)
   - Do you know what time it is, what time it is, what time it is? Oh do you know what time it is? It’s time to (fill in activity).
   - If you have a child whose job it is to move the schedule marker, you can let that child sing the final line (“It’s time to wash our hands!”) or you can change the last line to “We’d better ask our friend!” – the child can then announce what is next on the schedule.

Transitions with Waiting (when children must wait for all others to arrive before the activity can begin)

30. Have boxes of books and puzzles near the transition area. As children arrive to wait for the next activity, allow them to look at a book or work on a puzzle.
   - Be sure to change the items frequently to keep children’s interest

31. Have a large brown paper bag in the transition area. Place a mystery item in the sack and close it so the children cannot see what is inside. Let the children play “20 Questions” to guess what is in the sack. Give guesses and hints as needed.
   - The child who guesses correctly can be a special helper for the activity.
   - This game will also encourage those children who are “straggling” to hurry to the activity.

Partner Transitions

32. Create matching cards (Example for older children – one set as capital letters, the other has lower case letters; one has an animal, the other the place that animal lives)(Example for younger children – each matching set has the same item – both cards have blue squares, both cards have 5 dots)
   - Pass out one card to each child (making sure that every card has a match).
   - The children can find their matching card and line up with their partner.
   - If you have an odd number of children, one child can partner with a teacher, or you can have a group of three (just create a set of cards with 3 matches).

33. Partner Sticks (Transition Magician 2, Henthorne, Larson, & Chvojcek)
   - Use your partner sticks to pair up the kids in going to line up.
   - Have children pull a stick out of the can.
   - Then have them find a friend with a matching stick.
   - Once they find a matching stick, they go to the line together.
   - When they get to the line their stick acts as a “ticket” to get out the door.
Transition to Specific Activities

34. Group Time/Circle Time

- **Surprise Sack/Magic Bag**
  - Put a very special something in your bag and have the children guess what’s inside.
  - You can even give them hints.
    - (To “Mary Had a Little Lamb”)
      - Ms. _____ has a magic bag, magic bag, magic bag,
      - Ms. _____ has a magic bag,
      - I wonder what’s inside.

- **Character Hat:**
  - Find a rather tall, attention grabbing hat and use it to announce circle time. Cut out different characters from the story you are about to read with your students. Attach Velcro to the characters and place on your ‘attention grabbing’ hat. Announce story time while walking around the room so everyone sees your hat. This will catch the children’s attention and make them eager to listen and get ready for circle time.

- **You could also sing a little song during cleaning up and while getting ready to transition to circle time:**
  - **Circle Time** (Transition Tips and Tricks, by Jean Feldman - pg. 58)
    - (To the tune of “Mary Had a Little Lamb)
      - Please come pick up your toys, Please come read with me,
      - Pick up your toys, Read with me,
      - Please come pick up you toys, Please come read with me,
      - For its story time. For its story time.
  - **Stop and Drop** (Transition Tips and Tricks, by Jean Feldman - pg. 29)
    - (To the tune of “Frere Jacques”)
      - Running, running, (run in place)
      - Running, running,
      - Hop, hop, hop (hop on right foot)
      - Hop, hop, hop (hop on left foot)
      - Tiptoe, tiptoe, (tiptoe)
      - Then I stop, (hold up hand or stop sign)
      - And I drop! (sit down)
  - **Wiggle Wobble** (Transition Tips and Tricks, by Jean Feldman - pg. 30)
    - (Chant until all have come to circle)
      - Heads go wiggle, wobble (wiggle head from side to side)
      - Wiggle, wobble,
      - Wiggle, wobble.
      - Heads go wiggle, wobble,
      - Then they STOP! (freeze)
      - Fingers go wiggle, wobble (wiggle fingers)
      - Wiggle, wobble,
      - Wiggle, wobble.
      - Fingers go wiggle, wobble,
      - Then they STOP! (freeze)
- **Criss-Cross Applesauce** (Transition Tips and Tricks, by Jean Feldman - pg. 77)
  - Criss-cross applesauce,
  - Give a little clap. (clap hands)
  - Criss-cross applesauce,
  - Put them in your lap. (put hands in lap)
  - Criss-cross applesauce,
  - Quiet as can be.
  - Criss-cross applesauce,
  - Eyes on me. (point to self)

- **Put Your Hands in Your Lap** (Transition Tips and Tricks, by Jean Feldman – pg.65)
  (To the tune of "If You’re Happy and You Know It")
  - To quiet children:
    - Put your hands in your lap, in your lap.
    - Put your hands in your lap, in your lap.
    - Put your hands in your lap, then give a little tap (tap tips of pointer fingers).
    - Put your hands in your lap, in your lap.

- **Circle, Circle** (Teachable Transitions, by Rae Pica)
  (To the tune of Twinkle, Twinkle)
  - Circle, circle
  - Nice and round
  - Make one now
  - Without a sound.
  - Stand (sit) together
  - On the floor,
  - Come together
  - Now and you’re
  - In a circle
  - Nice and round
  - The most perfect
  - Circle found!

35. **Naptime**

- Using a play wand, walk around the room at naptime and locate children who are meeting behavior expectations. Tap that child gently and say “I like how Suzie is resting quietly. She is ready for the naptime wand!” Sing “Goodnight, Suzie, Goodnight. It’s time to rest your eyes.” (Or any other restful song)
- This provides all children with one-on-one with the teacher as they meet the behavior expectations.
- **Follow the Light** (Transition Magician 2, Henthorne, Larson, & Chvojcek): Use a decorated flashlight to “lead the way” to the child’s cot. Have the child “follow the light”.
- **Quiet as a Mouse** (Transition Magician 2, Henthorne, Larson, & Chvojcek): Use a mouse puppet or stuffed animal to tell the children to “tip toe as quiet as a mouse” to their mats or to look for those who are napping quietly and give kisses for being “quiet as a mouse”
- **Put Your Heads on Your Mat** (Transition Tips and Tricks, by Jean Feldman – pg.65)
  (To the tune of "If You’re Happy and You Know It")
  - To calm for rest time:
    - Put your heads on your mat, on your mat.
    - Put your heads on your mat, on your mat.
    - Put your heads on your mat, close your eyes and relax,
    - Put your heads on your mat, on your mat.
- **Soothing Imagery (Teachable Transitions, by Rae Pica):** Ask children to go to their mats like:
  - balloons losing air and falling from the sky
  - wind-up toys winding down (slowing in motion)
  - a feather floating to the ground
  - turtle moving
  - snails crawling
  - sleepy bears
  - a car running out of gas
  - you are shrinking really small
  - a tired swimmer
  - a floating cloud
  - you’re lying on the beach
  - a melting ice cube
  - a bubble floating
  - smell the flowers
  - blow out the candles
- **Sleepy, Sleepy (Teachable Transitions, by Rae Pica)**
  (To the tune of Twinkle, Twinkle)
  Sleepy, sleepy, little kids
  Time to rest those heavy lids.
  Close your eyes and breathe real deep.
  Fall into a gentle sleep.
  Sleepy, sleepy, little kids
  Time to rest those heavy lids.
- **We're Getting So Tired (Teachable Transitions, by Rae Pica)**
  (To the Tune of On Top of Ol’ Smokey)
  We’re getting so tired
  It’s time to lie down,
  We’re glad it is naptime
  We won’t make a sound.
  We’re getting so tired,
  We can’t wait to rest.
  And once we are rested,
  We’ll be at our best.

36. **Snack/Lunch**
- When everyone (or almost everyone) is seated at the table sing “Put your hands in the air, in the air; Put your hands in the air, in the air. Put your hands in the air, but we don't want to leave them there! So... Put your hands in your lap, in your lap; Put your hands in your lap, in your lap. Put your hands in your lap, and we're ready for our snack. Put your hands in your lap, in your lap!” (To the tune of “If You’re Happy and You Know It”)

37. Toothbrushing

- As children finish their meal and toothbrushes are passed out, take the children on a “Bear Hunt”
- Children who are waiting to brush their teeth can participate in the hand motions – those who are finishing their meal will hurry to participate.
- At the end of the activity, when everyone is safe at home, pretend that the bear has followed them home and is banging on the door. He wants an apology for being woken up! Pick a child to give the apology. When the child speaks, say (in a bear-like voice) “Phew! You have worse bear breath than me! I’m outta here!” Then say (in normal voice) “Guess we’d better brush our teeth!”
- This transition is usually long enough so that even the slowest of eaters are ready at the end.

Bear Hunt Words:

We're going on a bear hunt.
We're gonna catch me a bear.
What a beautiful day!
We're not scared.

Oh-oh! Grass! Long, wavy grass!
Can’t go over it; can’t go under it.
Gotta go through it!
(Swishy-swashy; Swishy-swashy)

We're going on a bear hunt.
We're gonna catch a big one.
What a beautiful day!
We're not scared.

(Repeat with various problems to overcome)
Oh-oh! A river! A deep, cold river! (Splish-splash)
Oh-oh! Mud! Thick, oozy mud! (Squelch-squerch)
Oh-oh! A forest! A big, dark forest! (Stumble-trip)
Oh-oh! A snowstorm! A swirling, whirling snowstorm! (Hooooo-whoool)
Oh-oh! A cave! A narrow, gloomy cave! (Tip-toe)

What’s that? Two big furry ears... Two big googly eyes... One cold wet nose...
IT’S A BEAR!

Quick! Back through the cave! Tip-toe! Tip-Toe!
Back through the snowstorm! Hooo-whoool!
Hooo-whoool!
Back through the forest! Stumble-trip! Stumble-trip!
Squelch-squerch!
Back through the mud! Squelch-squerch!
Squelch-squerch!
Back through the river! Splish-splash! Splish-splash!
Back through the grass! Swishy-swashy! Swishy-swashy!

Open the door! Shut it tight!
(Sigh) Safe and Sound!
(Pound on table) Oh no! It’s the bear! He’s found us!

(Bear Voice) Who woke me up – who woke me up?! How rude! I demand an apology!