



Transition Strategies

Typical transition periods in afterschool programs occur when arriving at the program building, entering program areas, switching from one activity to another, and meeting family members at pick-up time. You can help students execute smooth transitions through clearly expressed behavioral expectations, instructor modeling, transition games or activities, and routines. Here are some ways to create smooth transitions that ensure a safe and positive environment for students and help staff make the most of tight schedules.

Before the Transition

- Plan and prepare programming to include minimal transition times.
 - Example: Establish which program staff members will welcome students at the door and which will begin warm-up activities.
 - Plan activity extensions so students who finish an activity early have something to do.
- Use verbal or nonverbal cues to help students engage in active listening and understand transition expectations. Here are some possibilities:
 - Call and response (e.g., “What time is it?” “It’s transition time,” or “It’s cleaning time”).
 - Movement that facilitates transition (e.g., clean-up song and dance).
 - Show pictures or personally model the next action.
 - Announce an upcoming transition (e.g., “It’s almost time for story time theater”).
- Create consistency during transitions so students are aware of behavioral expectations.
 - Example: Students are expected to come into the building, sign in, go to the recreation area first, and then go to the homework area.
 - Create signs that show the transition patterns and student expectations. It’s a good idea to involve youth in deciding the flow and creating the signs.

During the Transition

- Celebrate the prior activity so students feel a sense of completion and accomplishment.
- Use age-appropriate strategies such as songs, word or guessing games, and rhymes to maintain reasonable order while still having fun.
- Reduce long waiting periods for students during transition times by having students compete for timely but orderly lineup.
- Select one student to give a one-sentence summary of the activity they just completed to underscore the sense of completion.
- Identify peer leaders each day so the students start to take ownership of a successful transition.

After the Transition

- Provide positive feedback when students execute a smooth transition.
- Identify by name students and groups who model a smooth transition.
- Create an age-appropriate cheer or tradition to mark a smooth transition.