



## Preparing for Transitions Between Activities

- Transitioning between activities or locations can be difficult for people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Anticipating some of the challenges and preparing ahead of time can help reduce these challenges.
- Prepare things ahead of time to help to reduce the number of demands on the child during transitions. Having the child's clothes and food ready the night before can make the morning less stressful.
- People with ASD may not understand time alerts, such as "We'll be leaving in fifteen minutes." It may be more helpful to use other signals such as "after one more commercial on TV" or "after two more turns in the game." Be consistent and follow through with specified transition times. Resist the temptation to extend the timeframe as the child will learn that he or she can delay or avoid the transition.
- Try to anticipate what may happen during an expected transition and plan accordingly. For instance, if it is difficult for a child to leave for school after watching TV, then don't allow him or her to watch television during the morning routine. Because you can't always anticipate what might go wrong, communicate that the uncertainty of the next activity and alternatives to the one planned. You never know if a store may be closed or an amusement park ride may be broken.
- When transitioning from an enjoyable activity to one that is less preferred, offer the child a toy, snack, or other item that is interesting to him or her. This helps to distract and comfort the child and ease the transition process.
- Visual aids and other tools such as social stories, activity schedules, timers, and transition cues can help a child understand the transition before it happens. A template to create social stories, a visual countdown tool, and other helpful resources, can be found at [www.childrens-specialized.org/KohlsAutismAwareness](http://www.childrens-specialized.org/KohlsAutismAwareness).
- Families with multiple children often need to attend activities or appointments for the siblings of a child with ASD. To help a child transition to an activity that may not be enjoyable to him or her, pack a bag of preferred items such as toys and snacks to make it more exciting.
- Transitions can be difficult at any time. However, after a long day or after challenging work, these changes can be more difficult. There may need to be a few times when you need to change plans in order to prevent negative reactions or to handle other critical matters.

## Helpful Resources

- **18 Tips to Make Transitions Easier**  
<http://www.snagglebox.com/2012/07/18-tips-to-make-transitions-easier.html>
- **Helping Children Make Transitions between Activities**  
<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/briefs/wwb4.pdf>
- **How to Help Your Child Transition Smoothly Between Places and Activities**  
[http://www.challengingbehavior.org/do/resources/documents/bkpk\\_transitions.pdf](http://www.challengingbehavior.org/do/resources/documents/bkpk_transitions.pdf)
- **Planning Transitions to Prevent Challenging Behavior**  
[http://journal.naeyc.org/btj/200805/pdf/BTJ\\_Hemmeter\\_Transitions.pdf](http://journal.naeyc.org/btj/200805/pdf/BTJ_Hemmeter_Transitions.pdf)
- **Transition Cues**  
<http://www.nwresd.k12.or.us/autism/UsingaTransitionCue.html>
- **Transitions: Three Tips to Make Them Easier for Children with Autism**  
<http://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/transitions-three-tips-easier-children-autism-0508135>
- **Transitions without Tantrums**  
<http://autismdigest.com/transitions-without-tantrums/>

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