

Reducing Wait Times During Transitions

Keep children moving safely, calmly, and purposefully with planned cues, active waiting, and quick name-to-face checks.

Prepared transitions reduce waiting.



Transitions are often where challenging behaviors begin because children are waiting with nothing meaningful to do. The goal is not to rush children. The goal is to prepare, move, count, and connect so children spend less time standing or waiting without purpose.

Prepare

Cue + materials

Move

Small groups

Confirm

Name-to-face



Prepare Before You Move

- Give a short warning: "In two minutes, we will clean up and go outside."
- Use a cue: Picture schedule, song, chime, timer, or hand signal.
- Stage materials ahead: Coats, wipes, cups, clipboards, or activity bins are ready before children line up.
- Move in small groups: Avoid having the whole class wait while one child finishes.



Expedite Headcount + Name-to-Face

- Count before movement: Count while children are gathering, not after they have already been waiting.
- Name-to-face while moving: Say each child's name as you visually confirm face, body, and location.
- Assign clear roles: One adult leads, one follows, and one completes count/name-to-face when possible.
- Recount at key points: Before leaving, upon arrival, and whenever the group changes location.

Quick phrase for staff: Count, connect, confirm, then move.



Give Children Something To Do

- Movement jobs: "Touch your shoulders," "Walk like quiet mice," "Find something blue."
- Transition helpers: Door holder, caboose, song leader, schedule checker.
- Short songs or chants: Choose songs that end when children arrive.



Teacher Reflection

- Where are children waiting the longest?
- Can materials be prepared before calling children?
- Can we move in smaller groups?
- Are headcount and name-to-face quick, accurate, and part of movement?

Bottom line: Smooth transitions are planned, active, and predictable. Less idle waiting means calmer children, clearer supervision, and safer movement. Images are AI-generated illustrations.