



## Backpack Connection Series

### About this Series

The *Backpack Connection Series* was created by TACSEI to provide a way for teachers and parents/caregivers to work together to help young children develop social emotional skills and reduce challenging behavior. Teachers may choose to send a handout home in each child's backpack when a new strategy or skill is introduced to the class. Each *Backpack Connection* handout provides information that helps parents stay informed about what their child is learning at school and specific ideas on how to use the strategy or skill at home.

### The Pyramid Model



The Pyramid Model is a framework that provides programs with guidance on how to promote social emotional competence in all children and design effective interventions that support young children who might have persistent challenging behavior. It also provides practices to ensure that children with social emotional delays receive intentional teaching. Programs that implement the Pyramid Model are eager to work together with families to meet every child's individualized learning and support needs. To learn more about the Pyramid Model, please visit [challengingbehavior.org](http://challengingbehavior.org).

### More Information

For more information about this topic, visit TACSEI's website at [www.challengingbehavior.org](http://www.challengingbehavior.org) and type "transition" in the Search Box in the upper-right corner of the screen.



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# How to Help Your Child Manage Time and Understand Expectations

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**T**ime is an unclear measure for children. It is very common for a parent to feel frustrated with a child when he has not done what he was asked to do (e.g., pick up toys, put on shoes, finish snack) even after he has been given a five-minute warning. However, it is important for parents to know that there is little difference between five minutes and an hour to young children because of the way they experience time. Children live in the moment and the future is difficult for them to measure. When parents use time (rather than events such as "when I get to the top of the stairs") to communicate what they expect the child to do, it can lead to the child feeling confused and frustrated, and ultimately, the child expressing his emotions through a tantrum.



Timers, particularly sand timers, are excellent tools parents can use to help young children measure time and understand expectations. Children can see the sand timer, turn it over and watch the sand fall to the bottom. There is a clear beginning, middle and end which gives children a way to predict and understand what will happen when the sand runs out. Sand timers empower children and help them to feel that they are a part of the process rather than simply being told what to do. Sand timers also give parents an opportunity to encourage and compliment their child when he is moved to action to "beat the clock"—a much more enjoyable and effective activity than nagging.



### Try This at Home

The skills needed to share, trade and take turns can be taught using sand timers. For more information on how to teach the skills of sharing, trading and taking turns, check out those topics in the Backpack Connection Series at [www.challengingbehavior.org](http://www.challengingbehavior.org).

- » **Taking Turns:** "I see that Tony is playing with the puppets right now. When this three-minute timer is done, it will be your turn."
- » **Trading:** "You are having so much fun playing with your train. When the timer is done, you and Austin can trade. He will give you his car and you can give him your train."
- » **Sharing:** "You and Ben are both playing in the sand. There is only one shovel and two boys. You have the bucket and Ben has the shovel. First Ben can shovel the sand into the bucket and when this timer is done, you can shovel the sand into the bucket. That is a great way to share the sand toys!"

- Sand timers can help with transitions, or children moving from one activity to another. "I see you are happy playing with your Legos. It is time to go to school. Would you like to put your shoes on now or in one minute?" After you say this, simply flip over the sand timer and you may be surprised how your child is able to make the transition on his own.
- Sand timers can help move an activity along (e.g. clean up time). "I wonder if you can put all your trains into the box in three minutes."
- Sand timers can help YOU stay on track too. "I would be happy to get down your puzzles. I am on the phone and will

do it in five minutes." This clear boundary teaches children exactly what to expect

- Sand timers can also help at dinner time. "We all sit together as a family at dinner time. You can get up when the timer is done."



### Practice at School

Sand timers are used at school to help children learn how to take turns and solve problems. Sand timers are also used to let children know how long an activity will take or to let them know that they will be transitioning to a new activity soon. Sand timers allow children to manage time tasks without help from an adult and give them the ability to retain control over a situation because they can watch the sand falling and see that time is almost up. Sand timers are also used in classrooms to offer choice. For example, a teacher might ask, "Would you like to do that in one minute, or two?"



### The Bottom Line

Time is a difficult concept for young children to grasp. Sand timers give children something they can see and touch to help them measure time. When sand timers are used to help children understand expectations, take turns and transition to new activities, they can reduce the frequency of challenging behavior, encourage children to participate in tasks and even do things by themselves. Parents benefit from sand timers as well because the timer reduces or eliminates the need for the child to be constantly reminded and monitored. Additionally, sand timers can offer more opportunities for parents to compliment and congratulate their child.



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