

# Makes Appropriate Movement between Activities

## What does “Makes Appropriate Movement between Activities” mean?

This skill shows how a child handles transitions or the time in between classroom activities. Transitions allow the whole class to move together from one activity to the next, like moving from center time to lunchtime. To keep the class on track, it is important that transitions between activities are smooth. A child that demonstrates this skill stops the current activity and follows the teacher’s directions to go to the next activity. This skill is important because it shows that children are learning about the flow of the school day and understand that the class must stop and start activities together to be successful.

## TIPS for TEACHERS

### How can I explain this skill to children?

You can explain the importance of making appropriate transitions to children by describing a trip from one place to another. For example, you can ask the class to imagine they’re going on a trip to the zoo. To get there and enjoy seeing the animals, you need to follow the directions from the school to the zoo so you don’t get off track. When we follow the directions and move from one activity to another, we get where we want to go faster and can spend more time learning and having fun.

### What are some examples of best practices from educational experts and fellow teachers?

#### TIP1

**Teach children how to Name it, Tame it, and Reframe it.** Making appropriate movements between activities requires children to stop and start activities when someone else says so. Stopping, in particular, can be frustrating for young children. You can help children learn to handle their frustration by teaching them the steps to *Name it, Tame it, and Reframe it*.

1. **Name it.** Tell children that when they feel an unpleasant emotion, they should take time to identify it. Give children an example of what naming an emotion looks like. For example, you can say, “If I don’t want center time to be over because it’s time for lunch, I might feel frustrated,” or “If I don’t want to stop drawing because I’m not done with my picture, I might feel frustrated.”
2. **Tame it.** Once children have identified what they are feeling, tell them to take a few deep breaths or count to five to help themselves feel better. For example, you can say, “When I feel frustrated, I count to five to help myself feel better.”

3. **Reframe it.** After children have calmed down, tell them to reframe the situation in a positive way. For example, they can focus on the next activity or on coming back to what they are doing later. Give children examples of how to reframe a situation. For example you can say, “When I don’t want center time to be over because it’s lunchtime, I feel frustrated, but I am also hungry at lunchtime and so once I leave the center I can eat,” or “When I don’t want to stop drawing because I’m not done with my picture, I feel frustrated, but I can save it for later and finish my picture during free time.”

Post a chart in your classroom to help remind children of these steps.

*This strategy was adapted from, Mulcahy, W. (2012). Zach gets frustrated. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing Inc.*

## TIP2

**Pinpoint, prune, and plan for transitions.** All transitions should be scheduled and part of a daily routine. It is helpful to remove unnecessary transitions from the daily schedule and make sure there is a plan in place to help children transition from one activity to the next. You can create opportunities for successful transitions through these three strategies:

- **Pinpoint.** Review your class’s schedule to identify transition points.
- **Prune.** Think about whether you can adapt or eliminate any of the daily transitions. Aim to reduce the number of transitions so that only essential ones remain.
- **Plan.** For each essential transition, create a plan for the transition time. For example, let children know that if they finish their worksheet early, they can read a book, draw at their desk, or work on a puzzle by themselves while they wait for the next activity (see Tip 4 for more ideas).

## TIP3

**Help children prepare for transitions.** To make appropriate transitions between activities, children need to use several skills that they are still developing, like following directions and showing patience. To help children learn how to do this, try these three steps:

**1. Attention.** Make sure you have children’s attention before telling them about a transition. You can use your favorite attention grabber to get their attention (check out Tip 2 under “Listens and follows directions” for more ideas). Before using an attention grabber in the classroom, make sure you model it several times so children understand it signals that their attention is needed. To reach all children, it is also helpful to use verbal and nonverbal attention grabber such as:

- Verbal Attention Grabber. “Hocus pocus, everyone focus,” or “Tootsie roll, lollipop, we’ve been talking, now let’s stop!”
- Visual Attention Grabber. Dim the lights or use a picture of a stop sign.
- Auditory Attention Grabber. Ring a bell, play a song, or speak more and more softly so that children must be quiet to hear what you are saying.

**2. Coming Attractions.** Children respond better to transitions when they know that they are coming. Before a transition, remind children what is coming next. For example, “After snack time, you all get to pick a station to work at for centers.” You can also ask children what activity comes next to help them to think about the schedule and anticipate transitions. If there is a visual schedule of the daily routine posted in the

classroom, use a cutout of a child that moves from activity to activity throughout the day. Children can prepare for transitions when they see you move the cutout to the next activity.

**3. Countdown.** Give children warnings about the time left until a transition. For example, “Five minutes until centers ends and we move to the rug for Read Aloud time.” You can also use a timer and set it to go off when an activity is over.

## TIP4

**Build Transition Bridges.** Let children know that the time *between activities* has a structure and requires their full attention and involvement. At the end of an activity, alert the class that they will be transitioning to a new activity and explain what they will do during the transition. Here are some examples of things children can do during a transition:

- **Staggered transitions.** Ask groups of children to move to the next activity based on some category, such as asking all children with a birthday in a particular month or everyone who’s wearing green to move to the next activity first. You can also ask children that transition well between activities to go first, so they can model the transition for others.
- **Transition buddies.** Establish transition buddies or pairs who move from one activity to another together. Ask one pair at a time, “What can you do together on your way to the door?” For example, pairs can choose to hop, sing, waddle like a duck, or pretend to swim to the door. You can also suggest an activity for pairs.
- **Stepping transitions.** Have children make simple movements, like getting in line at the door, by taking a step for each syllable of a word the teacher says to the class. For example, to get children to line up for lunch, the teacher can say “lunch words” like, “sandwich,” out loud for the class. Everyone in the class can take one step for each syllable of the word. Keep saying words until the whole class is in line.
- **Guessing transitions.** Hide a classroom object in or under something. Tell children that everyone gets to guess what the hidden object is, and after they guess, they can go to the next activity. Once everyone has transitioned, you will show them what the object is.
- **Singing transitions.** Use an interactive song to create structure during transitions. For example, you can sing the “Family Song” (to the tune of the “Muffin Man”) during transitions. Sing the song with a different member of a family each time (for example, a sister). If children have a sister, they get to transition to the next activity. Sing each round of the song with a different family member until everyone has transitioned.

**Family Song:** Do you have a sister, a sister, a sister? Do you have a sister, in your family?

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### How can I encourage children when I see them trying to learn this skill?

**Acknowledge children for their efforts!** For example, say, “Nova, you did a good job cleaning up and moving quietly to the rug” or “Avery, I see you trying your best to be patient and wait for the rest of the class to finish cleaning up!”

To learn more about the tips and where they came from, please visit our references page: [ckphilly.org/citations](http://ckphilly.org/citations)