



## Handling Transitions

Every day when his mother drops him off at child care, Jack cries. Then when she comes to pick him up, he throws a tantrum because he doesn't want to stop playing with his friends and go home. Jack's mother says he does the same thing at home: whenever she tells him it's time to do something else or go somewhere, he resists. Unlike some children who can easily go with the flow of whatever's happening, Jack has a hard time with transitions and his resistance is disruptive and frustrating.

### The importance of routines

Routines help make transitions easier. In addition, they:

- Play an important role in the development of young children and help children learn about normal human interaction.
- Provide predictability and are comforting.
- Reduce power struggles between caregivers and children.



### Tips for helping children handle transitions from one activity to another

- Create a ritual that the child can expect: at bedtime, brush teeth, read a story, sing a song, hug and kiss.

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- When you leave your child, give him or her something to keep until you come back, such as a picture or other small object.
- Give advance warning: “You can finish playing your game and then it will be time for bed.”
- Make transitions fun: for cleaning up toys before bed, sing a song: “This is the way we pick up toys.”
- Let the child choose how to make the transition: “Do you want to play one more game before we get ready for bed?”
- Especially in a child care setting with lots of children, help children develop the skills they need to transition from one activity to another more quickly: putting on and taking off coats, lining up, cleaning up toys. Less time spent in waiting for everyone else might help decrease problem behaviors during transition times.

## R E S O U R C E S

*Transitions with Young Children.* PA’s Promise for Children.

<http://bit.ly/2kFFJEs>

*Supporting Transitions: Using Child Development as a Guide.* Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. <http://bit.ly/2l2ThtE>

*Routines and Transitions.* NAEYC.

[www.naeyc.org/resources/topics/routines-and-transitions](http://www.naeyc.org/resources/topics/routines-and-transitions)

Programs and families can contact the program leadership directly at [PAIECMH@pakeys.org](mailto:PAIECMH@pakeys.org) with questions or concerns.

