



**Brilliant Minds**  
PSYCHOLOGY®  
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

# SUPPORTING TRANSITIONS



## WHAT IS A TRANSITION?

A transition is the process of moving from one state, condition, or stage to another. It refers to the changes children experience as they progress through various milestones in their lives. For many children, transitions can be both exciting and challenging. Examples include:

- Moving from daycare to Kindergarten (Kindy)
- Starting Kindy for the first time
- Starting Prep in "big school"
- Transitioning between different classes or environments as they get older

While these changes represent new opportunities for growth and learning, they can also be stressful for children—especially if they are not familiar with what to expect.



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# WHY DO CHILDREN STRUGGLE WITH TRANSITIONS?\*

Transitions can be difficult for children for a variety of reasons:

1. **Uncertainty and Anxiety:** The unpredictable nature of change can lead to anxiety. Children often fear the unknown, especially when they don't know what to expect.
2. **Need for Routine:** Children who thrive on routine may struggle when their established patterns are disrupted. The sudden change to a new routine or environment can feel overwhelming.
3. **Motor or Planning Challenges:** Children who have difficulty planning or coordinating motor tasks may feel unsure about how to meet new expectations, especially if the environment requires them to perform tasks they are not confident in.
4. **Sensory Overload:** New environments—such as a classroom or playground—can present sensory challenges (e.g., noise, lights, crowds) that overwhelm some children, causing them to feel scared or reluctant to transition.

**Separation Anxiety:** Children may also worry about leaving behind familiar faces—friends, teachers, or caregivers—and feel anxious about being in a new space without them.

## HOW CAN YOU HELP YOUR CHILD WITH TRANSITIONS?\*

Supporting a child through transitions involves careful preparation, reassurance, and practical strategies to ease the change. Here are some effective ways to help children manage transitions more successfully:

- **Prepare and Talk About What to Expect**
  - Discuss the upcoming transition with your child and explain what will happen. For example, “Next week, you will start Kindy, and you will meet your new teacher and classmates.”
  - Use social stories or visual aids that describe the process in simple, relatable terms.
- **Listen to Your Child's Concerns**
  - Let your child express any worries they have about the transition. Acknowledge their feelings and answer their questions to reduce fear or uncertainty.
- **Practice New Routines Beforehand**
  - If your child has a set routine, gradually introduce changes before the actual transition (e.g., waking up earlier, practicing the morning routine). This can make the new routine feel more familiar and manageable.
  - Create a visual schedule for your child, showing what their day will look like (e.g., “After breakfast, we go to Kindy; after Kindy, we have lunch”).



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- Visit the New Environment
  - If possible, take your child to visit the new school or Kindy before the first day. Meeting teachers and seeing the classroom can help make the environment feel more familiar.
  - Some schools offer "transition days" or opportunities to meet other children. These are great ways for your child to get comfortable with the school setting.
- Familiarise Your Child with the Layout
  - Take photos of the new school or classroom, or get a school map, so your child can visually remember the environment's layout.
- Celebrate the Transition
  - Celebrate milestones leading up to the big day. Acknowledge the excitement of starting school, and celebrate the first day with a positive experience.
- Communicate with the School
  - Reach out to the school and discuss any additional medical, learning or sensory needs your child may have.
  - Ask about transition statements or individualised plans to help your child feel supported. If your child has access to services like occupational therapy, speech therapy, or psychology, coordinate with these specialists and arrange meetings with school staff to ensure the transition is as smooth as possible.
- Discuss New Rules and Expectations
  - Talk with your child about the rules at their new school or Kindy. Make sure they understand the expectations for behaviour and what might happen if they break the rules.
- Get Comfortable with the Uniform
  - If your child is required to wear a school uniform, try it on a week or so before school starts. This allows time to adjust to the feel of the clothes and address any sensory sensitivities (e.g., itchy tags, tight clothing). Washing the uniform before wearing it can also help make it feel more familiar.
- Consider a Transition Item
  - Some children benefit from bringing a small comfort item from home, like a toy or a family photo. This item can provide reassurance and help ease the transition, especially in the first days. Be sure to talk to the school in advance to ensure this is allowed.
- Making a One-Page Profile for Your Child - A One-Page Profile (OPP) is a personalised tool that can be extremely helpful for supporting transitions, particularly for children with additional needs, learning differences, or those who may require extra support during a significant change. It's a concise document that provides important information about your child—focusing on their strengths, preferences, needs, and the best ways to support them. This profile can be shared with teachers, caregivers, and other professionals involved in your child's transition, ensuring everyone has a clear understanding of how to help.



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