



FACT SHEET

Supporting children's transitions to childcare: Tips for Adults

Settling children into a structured routine after a break, requires a thoughtful approach, to ensure they feel secure and supported. Establishing clear routines and offering gradual transitions, creates a smoother return for the children in our care.

Quality Area 1: Educational Program and Practice

Creating a consistent routine fosters a stable and predictable environment, which is essential for children's development and learning. A well-established routine also supports positive outcomes in children's health and well-being.

The gradual transition into routines supports continuity of learning and development, ensuring children are better prepared for structured educational settings.

Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety

Adequate sleep is crucial for children's health and well-being, and a bedtime routine directly supports this aspect of the NQS. This helps children feel emotionally and physically prepared for the day ahead.

Establish consistent routines

Why it helps:

Children benefit from consistency, as it provides a sense of stability and helps them adapt to the structure of the childcare environment. Predictable routines allow children to feel more secure and ready to engage in activities.

What to do:

- Set up a clear, structured schedule for the day, incorporating regular mealtimes, playtime, and quiet time. Making this visible for children can help build their understanding.
- Include familiar activities, such as a favourite story, song, or simple game, to create a sense of comfort before transitioning into the day's activities.
- Gradually adjust routines as needed, ensuring the flow aligns with childcare hours and activities.

Bedtime preparation

Why it helps:

Adequate sleep is vital for emotional regulation and focus. Children who aren't well-rested may struggle to concentrate and feel irritable throughout the day.

What to do:

- Aim for consistent bedtimes, with sufficient sleep (9-12 hours depending on age), to help children feel refreshed and ready for the day ahead.
- Encourage calming activities, such as reading or drawing, before bedtime to promote a relaxing environment.
- Avoid stimulating activities close to bedtime, as this can interfere with sleep quality.



Gradual Routine Reintroduction

Why it helps:

Transitioning from a break back to a structured routine can be a big shift for children. Reintroducing the routine step by step helps them feel more comfortable and reduces anxiety.

What to do:

- Begin reintroducing the childcare schedule a week or two before the first day back. This includes waking up at the required time and engaging in familiar morning preparations like packing bags or setting out clothes.
- Incorporate structured activities like puzzles, reading, or simple chores to simulate the activities they will encounter at childcare.
- Hold “practice runs” of the daily routine at home, even if it’s only for a few hours, to give children a sense of what to expect.

Address children’s concerns

Why it helps:

Returning to childcare after a break can bring up a mix of emotions, from excitement to anxiety. Acknowledging and discussing these feelings can help children feel heard and supported.

What to do:

- Ask open-ended questions like, “How do you feel about returning to childcare?” or “Is there anything you’re worried about?”
- Acknowledge children’s emotions and offer reassurance that it’s normal to feel apprehensive, while emphasizing the positive aspects of returning to childcare, such as seeing friends and engaging in fun activities.

Comfort Items

Why it helps:

Many children find comfort in having familiar objects with them in new or stressful environments. A comfort item can help ease any anxiety during drop-off or transitions.

What to do:

- Allow children to bring a favourite comfort item, such as a stuffed animal or blanket, to help them feel secure.
- Frame the item as a “little helper” that stays with them to provide reassurance during times of separation.

Create excitement around the transition

Why it helps:

Transitions are easier when children have something to look forward to. Incorporating fun activities can help build excitement and motivate children as they return to childcare.

What to do:

- Plan a small celebration or reward after the first day or week back to acknowledge their adjustment.
- Create a countdown calendar to build anticipation and give children a visual reminder of the exciting days ahead.
- Add an element of fun to the transition, like letting children pick out their supplies or choosing a special activity for the first day.

Maintain a positive and supportive attitude

Why it helps:

Children often mirror the emotional cues from their caregivers. A calm, positive approach can reduce anxiety and help children feel more confident about the transition.

What to do:

- Speak positively about the return to childcare, framing it as an exciting and natural part of their routine.
- Reinforce confidence in children’s ability to handle the change, offering support and encouragement throughout the process.
- Use affirmations to praise children’s readiness and resilience, fostering a sense of independence and self-assurance.

By implementing these strategies, we can create a supportive environment that helps children transition back to childcare smoothly and confidently. Providing structure, offering emotional support, and maintaining a positive atmosphere are key to ensuring a successful return to routine for both the children and the adults supporting them.