



TALK Transitions

Guidance for Early Years Professionals



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The aim of this booklet is to provide information and advice to Early Years Professionals in Halton who would like to know more about supporting a child's Speech, Language and Communication during transitions

Introduction

Children make many transitions in their lives.

Some are 'milestone' transitions such as starting at nursery or school. Some may even involve moving to a different country.

Transitions also occur on a daily basis (e.g. between home and settings and within the daily routine).

Transitions are an important part of life and offer opportunities for new experiences and personal growth but they may also include feelings of anxiety and uncertainty for children and their families.

Try to recall
transitions that
you have
experienced in
your own life

What were
they?

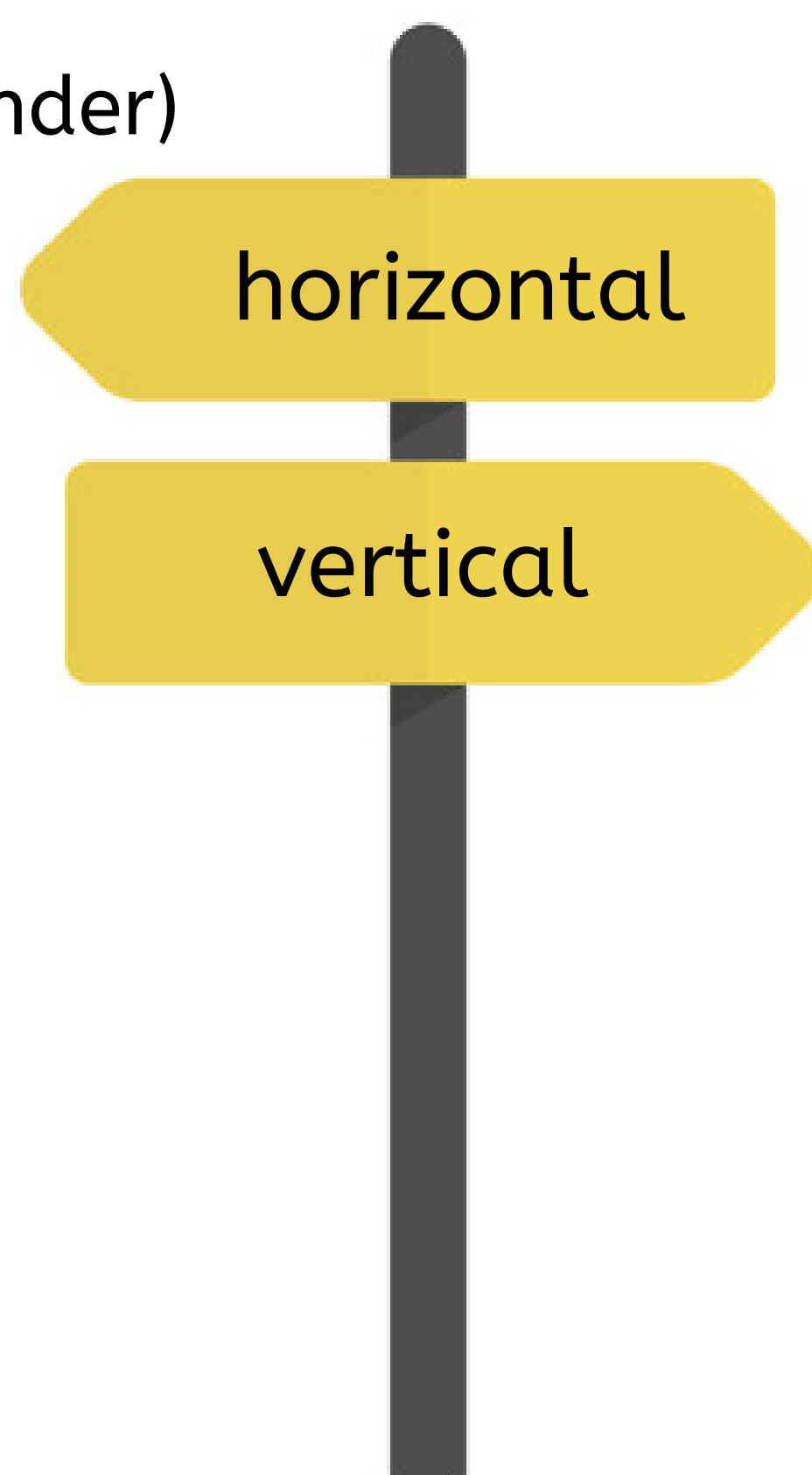
How did
they make
you feel?

Who helped
you?

Types of transitions

There are many different transitions that a child may experience throughout their life. Including...

- going to setting (Nursery/Preschool/childminder)
- changing settings
- moving to a new room within the setting
- going to school
- moving to a new class
- family break up or divorce
- new sibling
- reconstituted family
- before/after school clubs
- moving to a new country
- moving from a cot to a bed
- change of carer
- entering/leaving foster care



Horizontal transitions occur on a daily basis and usually refer to movement or a change in routine. Horizontal transitions describe activities such as children going from inside to outside, from home to nursery, from nursery to swimming, from playing with the blocks to group circle time etc. They also include taking part in less common events like sports days, baking and visitors.

In contrast, vertical transitions are much more significant and linked to specific events that do not happen on a regular basis. Starting school is described as a vertical transition and, interestingly, we often discuss children moving 'up' from nursery to primary school and moving 'up' from primary school to secondary school.

The road ahead



For a child with good speech, language and communication a typical day might look like this. The road is clear ahead and they know what's coming and when. Changes are communicated to them clearly and they can understand and communicate their feelings about them.

For other children, their day might feel more like this...



They are never quite sure what is coming next and when, they don't always understand when changes are communicated to them and they might not be able to understand and communicate their feelings about them.

Research

Researcher Hilary Fabian (2002) suggests that transitions fall into three categories:

Physical

change in physical environment, size, location, number of people.

Social

change in primary and peer relationships

Philosophical

change in ethos and values



EYFS

The Early Years Foundation Stage clearly highlights the importance of facilitating smooth transitions in order to foster children's emotional wellbeing and maintain the progression of their learning and development. Well supported transitions contribute to children's personal growth and help develop their self esteem and confidence, their independence and their resilience.



Principles

- ✓ Children's experiences and memories, views and feelings are respected and responded to.
- ✓ Children's individual interests, learning, development and strengths are recognised, valued and built on.
- ✓ There are systems and structures in place to ensure a coordinated and consistent approach to children's transition. However, the individual child is the starting point for thinking about transition; processes and systems must fit the child and not vice versa.
- ✓ Practitioners acknowledge that all children are unique and that their experiences of transition will be individual.
- ✓ Parents' knowledge and skills are valued and they are full partners in their child's transition. Parents are supported throughout the process.
- ✓ Practitioners have a responsibility to develop knowledge of children's background, culture, religion, home language, strengths and individual needs.
- ✓ Good working relationships are developed to support successful transition for children.

Case Study



Bella is 4 years old. Her parents work full time, but they have managed to organise childcare for Bella every day.

Before school on Mondays, Tuesday and Wednesdays, she goes to a childminder who has children in the same school. She also goes to an after-school club on those days.

On Thursdays, before and after school, she goes to her Nanna's house and her Nanna takes her to a swimming class.

On Friday, she is sometimes taken to school by her Dad if he is free, otherwise she goes to a neighbour's house and the neighbour takes her to school with her own children.

On Friday afternoons Bella's auntie picks her up from school and takes her to her house until her parents finish work and collect her.

Reflect...

How many transitions do you think Bella experiences? Do you work with children that experience multiple transitions like Bella? What do you think could be done to make the transitions easier for Bella?

Voice of the child

Listening to transitioning children can highlight barriers to their active participation in a setting environment, and identify areas for adult support.

Where there are barriers to developing shared understandings between different environments, children's experiences can lack connection.

Listening can involve ongoing observation and asking questions of others that know the child more closely.

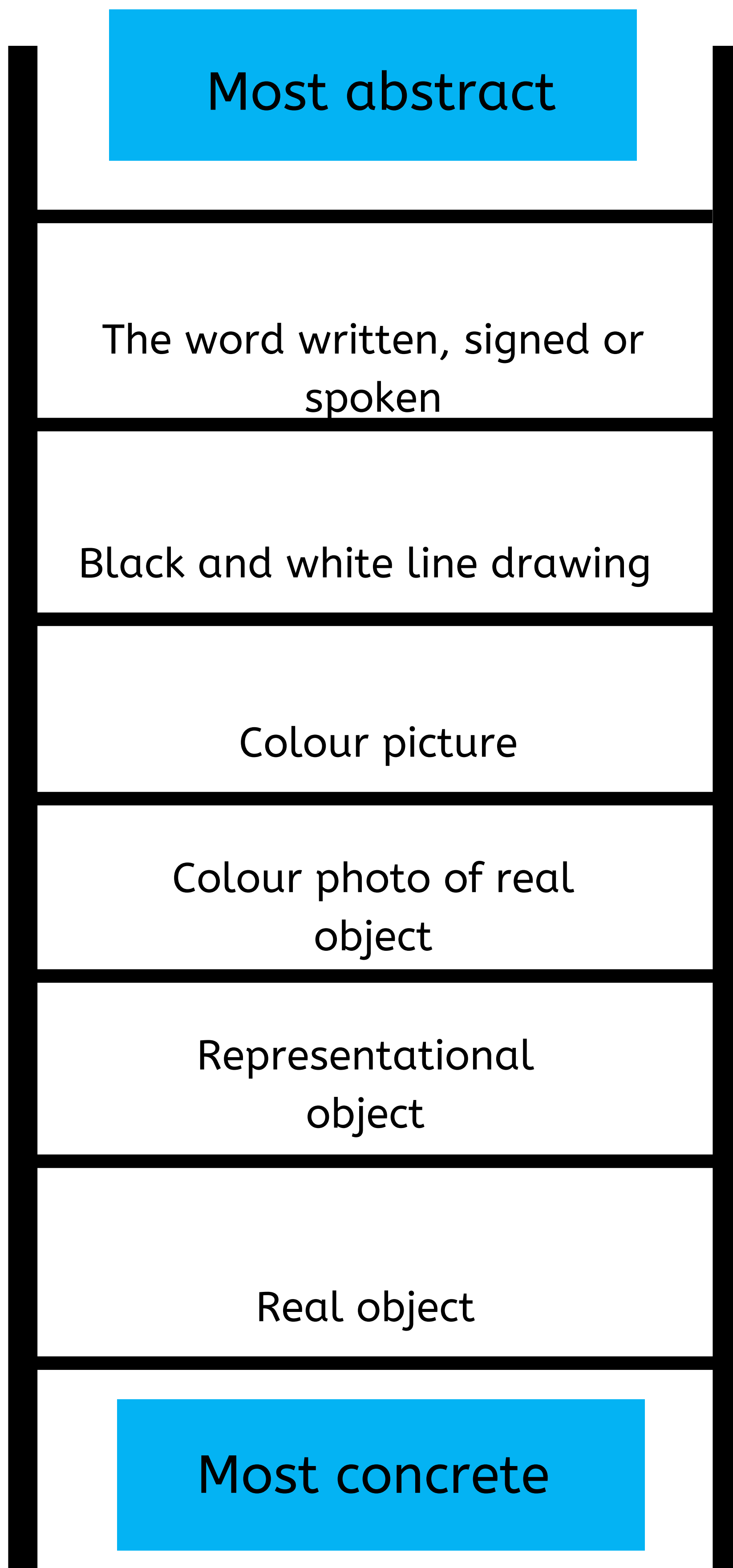


One page profile

A one-page profile can help professionals provide better person-centred care and support. It is a simple summary of what is important to someone and how they want to be supported.

- They should always be written in the first person.
- Make it personal about your child (www.sheffkids.co.uk have a range of characters and styles for free download).
- Ensure they are easily accessible and shared with everyone who is working with the child.
- Consider merging with an entry 'all about me' forms that you may already be using.

Symbol ladder - understanding verbal language with visual supports



Children with speech and language difficulties can sometimes present with:

- limited ability to sequence
- a lack of awareness of time
- poor auditory memory

Visual supports are therefore, a vital tool to support these children in their daily routine

Visual supports can...

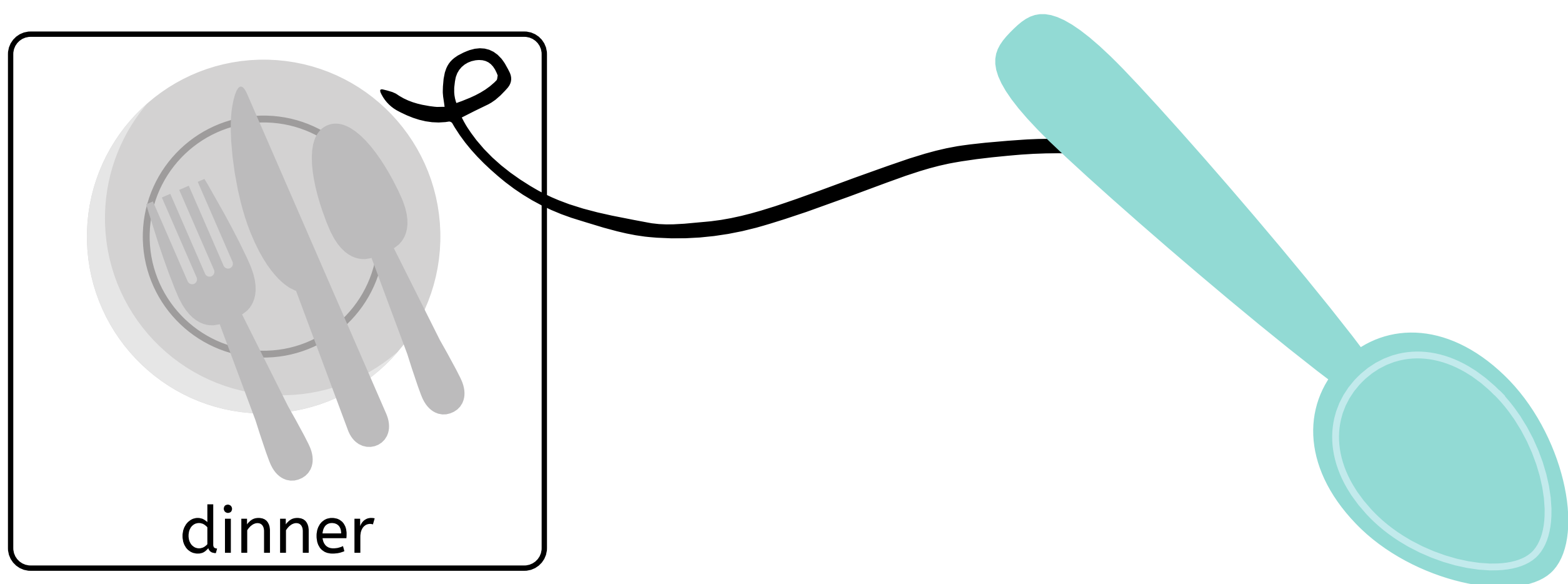
- provide structure and routine
- encourage independence
- build confidence
- reduce frustration and anxiety
- provide opportunities to interact with others

Visual supports can include...

- Objects of Reference
- Now and Next boards
- Visual timetables
- Sand timers
- Gestures and signs (e.g. Makaton)
- Visual schedules (e.g. washing hands)
- Support picture cards on a keyring or lanyard

Objects of Reference

Objects of Reference are objects that are used to communicate meaning in the same way as words and pictures. They can be used to represent anything we want to communicate: people, places, activities, events, etc. For example, a spoon to convey the message that it is time for dinner.



Objects of Reference are objects that are used in a structured and consistent way, and used every time the activity is going to happen. An object becomes an Object of Reference when the child begins to associate it with the activity it represents.

Objects of Reference aid understanding of spoken language and supports understanding of daily routines. They are used with children who find it difficult to understand spoken words, signs, symbols or photographs

Objects of Reference

Objects of Reference ...

- increase understanding of the spoken word
- signal the beginning of a new activity
- enable children to make requests
- provide a visual representation of the child's day

Introducing Objects of Reference

When introducing Objects of Reference start with a few objects that represent activities/events that occur frequently. Repetitions of use will make it easier for the child to understand the connection between the objects and its meaning.

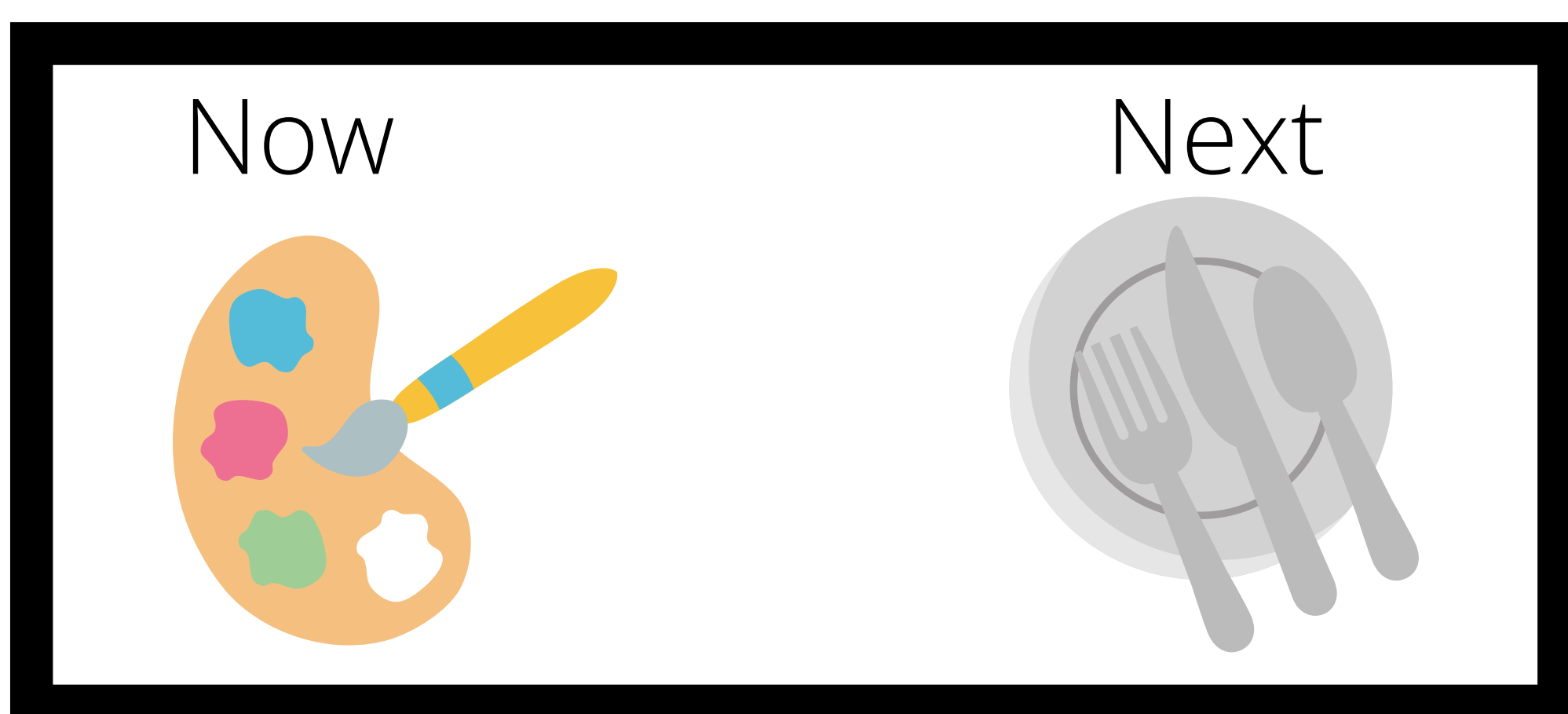
- Have the object at the activity/place to develop the child's awareness of it.
- Give the object to the child at the activity/place.
- Gradually give the object to the child further from the activity/place.
- Pair the object with symbols to develop understanding of symbols as well.

A consistent approach is really important. Everybody will need to introduce the object in the same way, using the same key words and signs.

Supporting daily transitions

Using symbols for '**Now and Next boards**' and '**Choice boards**' can increase the child's involvement, enables them to make choices and builds their confidence.

A '**Choice Board**' is made up of photographs/symbols showing the choice of toys and resources available. 'Choice Boards' can benefit all children, particularly children that have difficulty making choices from a large selection or children that are shy.



"Now and Next Boards' can be beneficial for children that ...

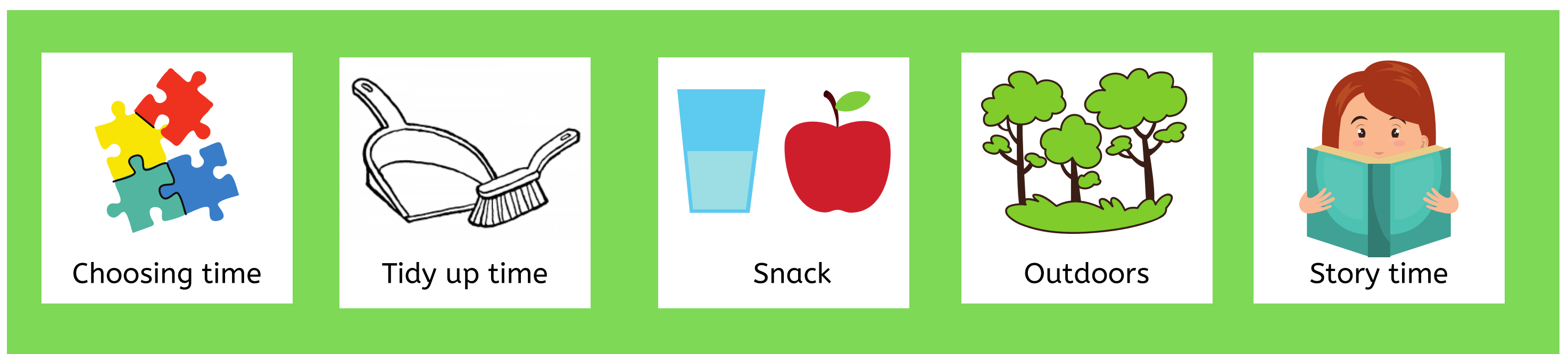
- have difficulty finishing one activity and starting another
- are reluctant to participate in a particular activity
- have limited attention skills

Once the child is confidently using the 'Now and Next Board' you may wish to introduce a 'Now, Next and Later Board'.

Supporting daily transitions

'A visual timetable is a sequence of symbols, pictures or photographs that represent activities to show children the likely routine throughout the session.

The visual images are usually displayed in a linear fashion, either vertically or horizontally.



Visual timetables can be used for individual children or whole groups. They can benefit all children as they know what to expect.

TOP TIPS FOR VISUAL TIMETABLES

- ★ Keep it clear and simple
- ★ Choose pictures/photographs that the child can recognise
- ★ Consider the timescale. Try doing one for the morning session and one for the afternoon.
- ★ Ensure that the visual timetable can be clearly seen by the child. Is it too high up?
- ★ When an activity has finished remove the card from the timetable this will help the child to see that the next activity is starting
- ★ Be consistent.

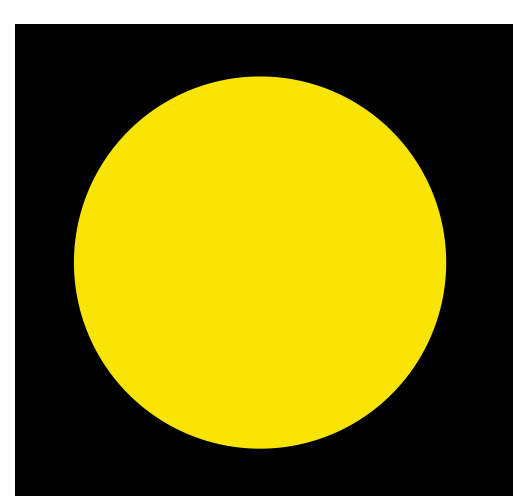
Supporting daily transitions

Visual schedules are a sequence of pictures/photographs that break the activity down into smaller steps (e.g. washing hands).

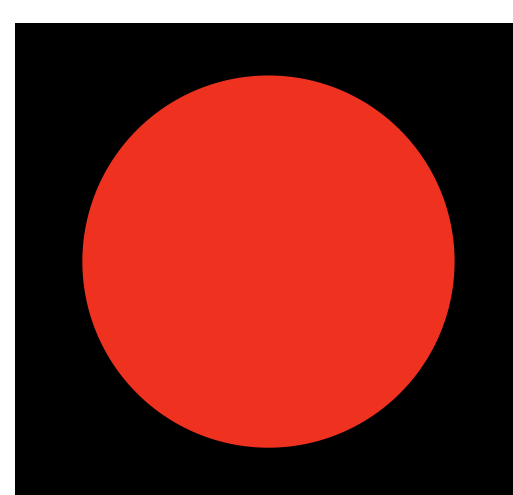


Visual cards on a key ring or lanyard enable you to show a child a picture/ photograph before the transition happens wherever you are at the time.

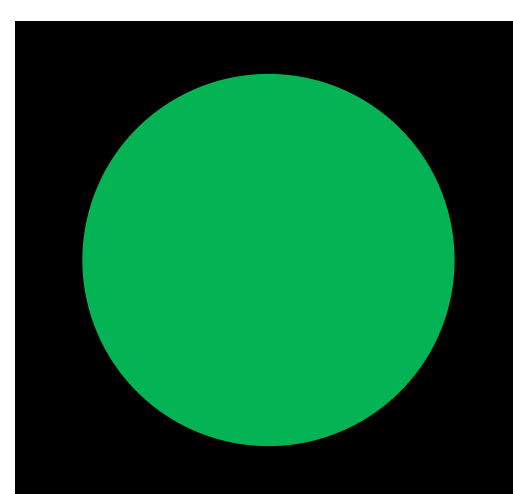
Try using visual supports to give 'time warnings'. Sand timers enable children to see when their time is nearly up. Using traffic light cards to say and show what you mean can support transitions



snack's
nearly
finished



snack's
finished



tidy up
starting

Consistency is key

Consistency

is



When children transition from one room to another or from one setting to another they may experience changes of equipment.

For example in the baby room the children may wash their hands with a flannel , in the toddler room an adult may take them to the bathroom to wash and dry their hands, whilst in the preschool room the children may be sent to wash and dry their hands independently and may even use a hand dryer. Spending time demonstrating what the children have to do and supporting the children with visual schedules, as previously discussed, will support this.

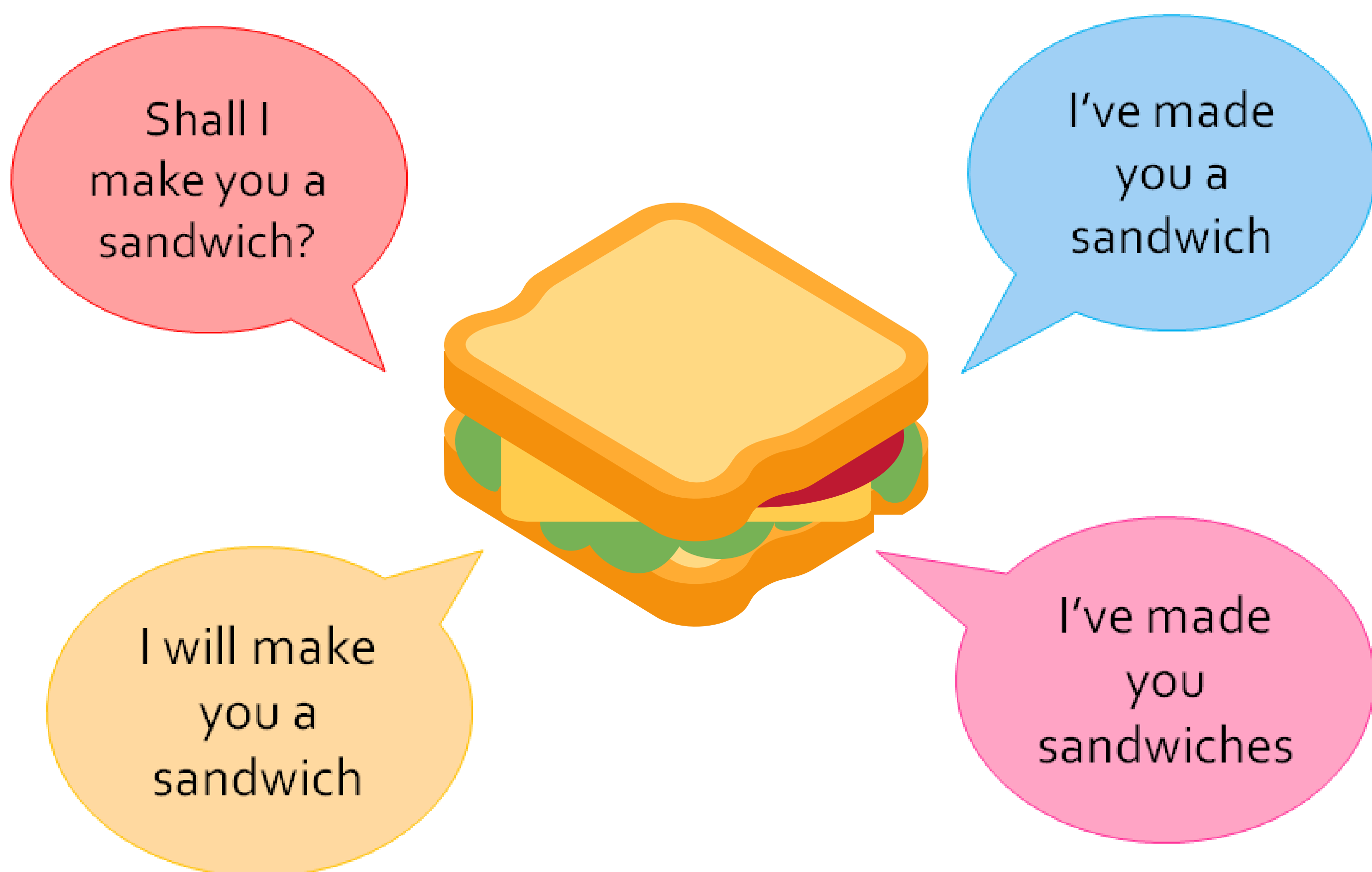
Consider
adult ratios

Take a moment or
two to consider
other changes
that the children
may experience
from similar
transitions

Names for areas
of continuous
provision

Transitions and language use

Children have to hear and understand what the little words and word endings mean

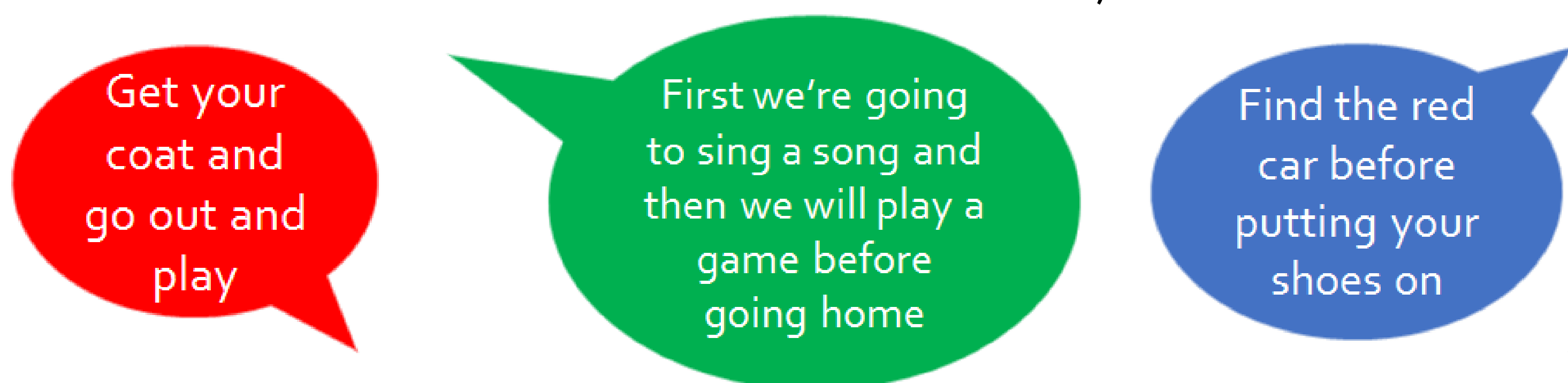


Break instructions down into small chunks.

Give instructions in the order they need to be completed.

Ensure to gain the child's attention and listening beforehand.

Use visuals, gestures or objects to support (e.g. a visual timetable to break down an instruction).



Possible effects of transitions

Physical

- Disturbed sleep and sleeping patterns (including sleeping walking and refusing to go to bed)
- Disturbed eating habits (including over-eating or anxious about food)
- Toileting accidents
- Frequent colds
- Regression or refusal in self-care tasks (e.g. feeding and dressing)
- Repetitive movements (e.g. head banging, sucking, rocking)

Communication and Language

- Dysfluency
- Reluctant talker/Selective mutism
- Withdrawal
- Lack of interest in communicating with others, including peers

Cognitive

- Difficulty concentrating
- Forgetfulness
- Difficulty following instructions
- Lower interest in activities

Emotional

- Increase in emotional outbursts
- Increase in impulsivity
- Crying and tearfulness
- Outbursts of anger directed at those with whom the child has a strong attachment
- Clinginess sometimes combined with angry gestures (e.g. hitting)

Social

- Attention-seeking through unwanted behaviour
- Anti-social behaviours that are unusual for the child and not age-appropriate (e.g. spitting)
- Withdrawal or lack of interest in joining other children for play
- Solitary play activities



Complex transitions

Transition is a time of change. It can be an exciting time but also a source of anxiety for children and their parents/carers.

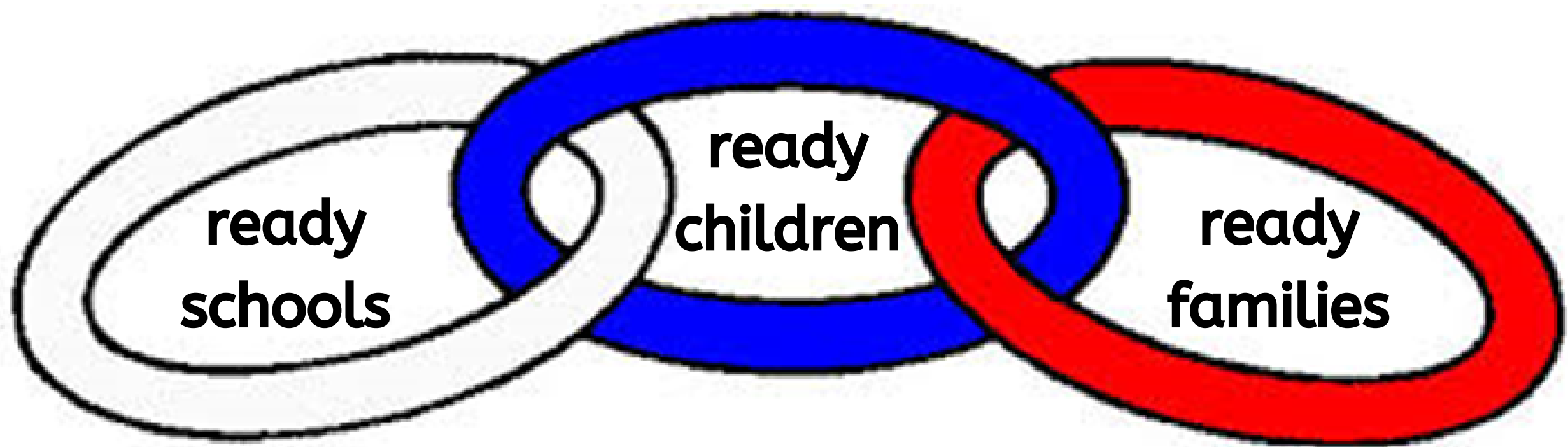
Complex transitions can involve linguistic and cultural shifts, listening to individual experiences can support children to explore their sense of belonging.

Developing relationships with children based on listening and trust, can provide a context for them to make meaning of their transition experiences.

Children who are making significant shifts in transition may vary their levels of participation over long periods of time and often look for the support of a long-term listening partner.



School readiness



Ready child

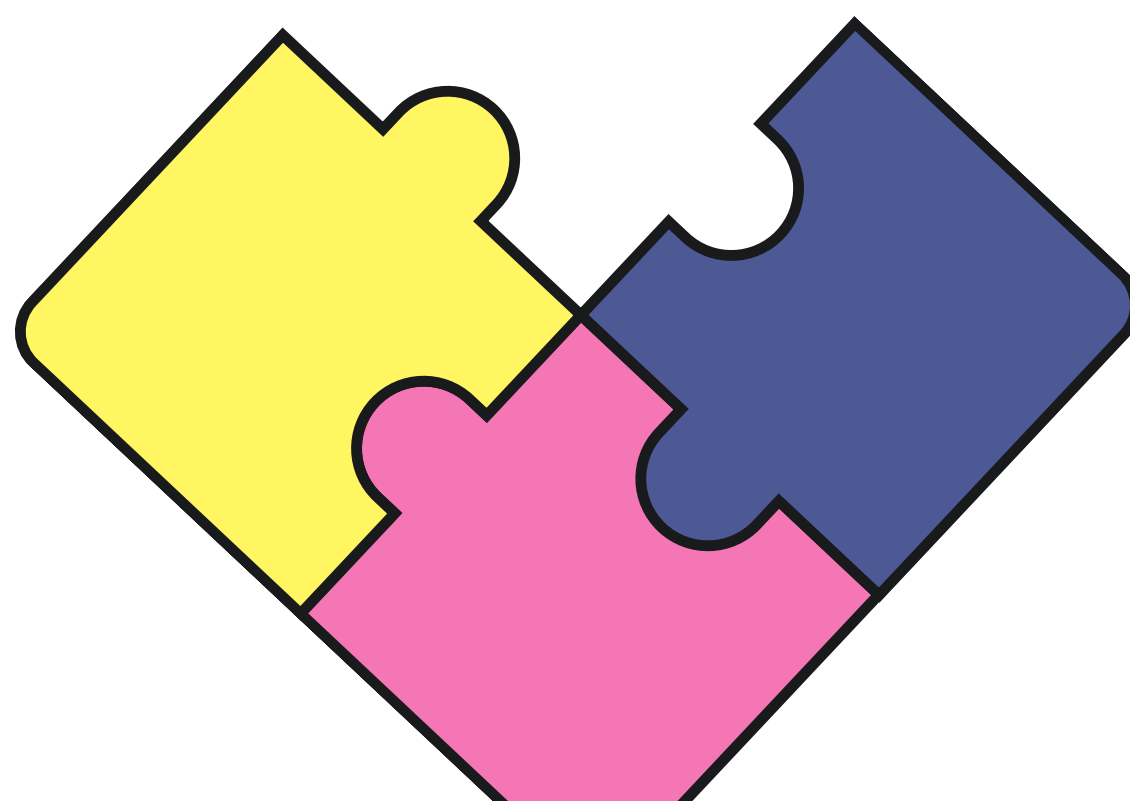
Focuses on children's learning and development (i.e. what children should know and be able to do in order to enter school ready and eager to learn.

Ready schools

Focuses on the school environment. Ready schools characteristically create continuity and maintain learning expectations for children between early learning and primary school environments.

Ready families

Focuses on parental and caregiver attitudes and involvement in their children's early learning, development and transition to school.



Every child is unique

Every child is unique. Every family is unique.

Everyone is different, has different needs and responds in different ways. Some children will want to know everything to prepare them 'big' transitions, others do not!

A child can be supported to make meaning about their transition experiences through visits, and dialogue between the family and practitioners.

Play experiences during visits should be in line with the usual activities on offer but also can be adapted to suit children's individual interests.

The individual child's ways of communicating need to be clear to everyone. When adults listen to, and respond to a child, and those who know the child well, they can develop shared understandings about new settings. The aim of listening here is to create continuity for the child and a sense of connection as they move between environments.

Continue to listen to the child and their family to enable you to understand if the physical strategies and arrangements that you have put in place have been successful.

The keyperson



Children need a key person who can give them lots of time and emotional support when they settle in, and throughout their time in the setting. Without this sort of social and emotional support, many children simply will not talk.

After all, you are much more likely to talk with someone whom you care about, and who is interested in you.

Care routines, like nappy changing, can easily be times for communication too. You might make up a special song with the child, or talk them through everything you are doing

Inviting children to bring special objects that reflect their interests, from home or other settings provides an opportunity to listen to their ideas about their identities.

Security objects such as a special blanket or soft toy may help a tired child get to sleep, or provide comfort when they are upset



Sharing stories with children that address different types of transitions and change is great for exploring and discussing emotions and feelings.



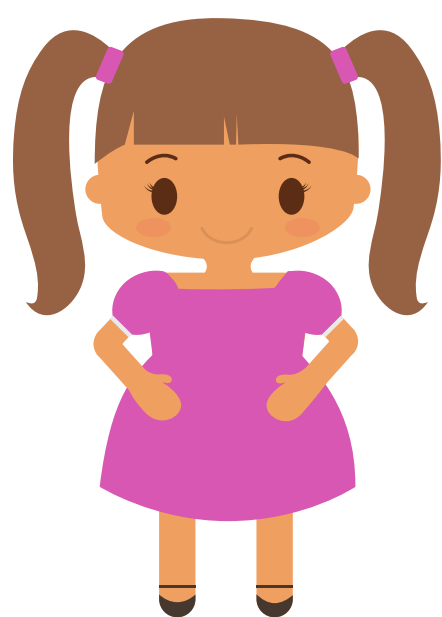
Be prepared

Before, during and after transition it is helpful to plan different activities which will provide the opportunity for children to talk and express their needs and feelings. The child may not be able to articulate in words exactly what they are thinking and feeling but these activities enable them to express themselves in different ways.

Preparatory Activities - plan ahead for 'big' transitions (vertical transitions) such as starting school, or changing rooms within a setting. Activities may include opportunities for role play and for children to express themselves through creative activities (e.g. school uniforms, book bags and other things associated with new schools in the home corner).



Arrange for children to visit their new setting/school and to take photographs of different areas, activities, staff and significant objects to refer back to in their setting (e.g. a photograph of their key person, where they will hang their coats, playground and lunch area).



Introduce a puppet or soft toy who is going to a new setting/school/group. The puppet can 'tell' the children what they are looking forward to as well as their concerns. The children can share their views and give advice.

What if...?

A reluctant speaker is a child who is anxious about speaking at the setting. For some children they may be reluctant to speak as they start in their new setting. For other children, they may become increasingly withdrawn and anxious at the setting. Some children may use gestures to communicate whilst others may only communicate with their friends rather than with the practitioners. Some children may only talk in single words or a whisper.

Transition into a new setting can be a trigger for **selective mutism**. Selective mutism is an anxiety based disorder. A child with selective mutism does not refuse or choose not to speak at certain times, they're literally unable to speak.

Selective mutism usually starts in early childhood, between 2 and 4 years old.

TOP TIPS

- Talk to parents: what is the child like at home? Are they shy? Are they bossy? What do they like playing with? What do they enjoy?
- Reduce the pressure on talking.
- Have a two-way communication book with parents/carers so they can talk to their child about what they have done in the setting.
- Consider a referral to specialist speech and language therapy service if it is an ongoing concern.

What if...?

For children with **English as an Additional Language (EAL)** transition can be daunting for both the child and the parent/ carer.

Involve parents/ carers as much as possible. Story sack resources, signs and labels in the home language will help families to feel genuinely welcomed and valued.

Create homemade books for the child. For example, one with a focus on transition (e.g. showing where the child hangs up their coat, going outside, washing hands, having snack).

TOP TIPS

- Consider what signals you are giving to the child that something is about to happen.
- Have a tidy up song and use it consistently to enable the child to become familiar with the routine.
- Use visual timetables and visual supports.
- Children will be thinking in their home language, therefore it is important for practitioners to talk slowly and to pause to enable the child to process the information.

Recap

For children to gain a positive view of a new setting and feel confident they need.....

- ★ a good knowledge of the layout of the room and some knowledge of the setting building
- ★ a knowledge of the practitioners and the way they think
- ★ an understanding of the language and communication used in the setting
- ★ an idea of the nature of the activities that take place
- ★ strategies to make friends
- ★ a sense of the setting culture



Useful links

You may be interested in the following links to further your knowledge.

<http://www.earlyyearsmatters.co.uk/eyfs/positive-relationships/transitions/>

<https://www.teachearlyyears.com/a-unique-child/view/supporting-transitions-in-the-early-years>

<http://www.selectivemutism.org.uk/information/information-for-parents/>

<https://abcdoes.com/abc-does-a-blog/2020/05/23/a-brain-based-approach-to-supporting-childrens-transitions-guest-post/>

<https://abcdoes.com/abc-does-a-blog/2019/06/22/transition-into-key-stage-one-a-blog-and-a-webinar/>

<https://abcdoes.com/abc-does-a-blog/2017/02/18/transition-making-the-unfamiliar-familiar/>

<https://elizabethjarman.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/the-cfs-approach-supporting-transition.pdf>

<https://app.croneri.co.uk/feature-articles/managing-transitions-early-years-provisions>