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“Small steps can make a real difference”

*Do transition points fill you with dread? The daily routines of a Reception class can be a challenge, but **Jess Gosling** has a few ideas to keep your classroom stress-free...*

1 Create calm: use a schedule

Think about your transition points and how best to create a calm atmosphere. Small steps can make a real difference, and working this out is trial and error! In class, talk through a visual timetable – using pictures or photos of activities – at the start of each day and explain the transition points.

Don't forget to go back to the timetable throughout the day, taking off each activity as it's done. See if the children can explain to you, or their friends, their schedule and share what they need to do at each transition point.

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4 Be clear about expectations

When starting the day or after a break, show photos of what the children need to do to get ready for lunch, how to pack their bags, and what waiting in a line should look like, and sound like! You can show photos electronically or print them for display.

Next, ask the children to 'teach' the class teddy what they need to do. Have fun with it – the teddy should get mixed up and do silly things! When transitioning around the school, remain clear about expectations.

2 Use an expert!

Once the class are clear on the steps needed for a transition, bring a member of the class to lead their peers as an expert! Children love playing 'teachers' and you will find the whole class will concentrate on their peer, whilst that child will be empowered and more confident.

You will need to initially scaffold this, by explaining there are a number of steps to complete a task (such as pack bags, go to lunch) and modelling how to order these.

3 Music can motivate

If you love a good sing-song, music works wonders with transitions! In tidy-up times especially, use a familiar song to signal it's time to pack up. I have known teachers to use the 'mission impossible' song as it helps speed up tidy time!

Make sure the children know what to do when they finish tidying – do they help others, or sit on the carpet? When transitioning to home time, have a song ready to sing for those who have finished, so you can help the slower packers. When lining up, a simple 'line up, line up' melody will remind everyone of the task.

5 Keep daily routines consistent

Don't make changes to your timetable if you don't have to! Of course, things crop up like special events, but otherwise, you should keep the same routines and transitions. When special events change a routine, talk this through with your class beforehand.

If you have cover teachers don't leave them unsupported, be their knight in shining armour by sharing what you do, such as whether the children tidy up before leaving the room. If any children struggle with routines make sure this is clear, as they will likely struggle with you gone.

6 Make sure you praise

Praise your children when transitioning, such as 'Wow, Angela, you put your bottle in your bag and put it on your name label!' This encourages others to follow and reminds them what you are looking for.

Some children may become special helpers to support others who struggle with jobs. When the whole class transitions well, pile on the encouragement. Ask teachers in the wider school to point this out, too. Five 'teacher comments' equal a party! Children thrive on praise and keeping the ethos a positive one helps them immensely.

7 Seating and space

I once had a class who almost had the domino effect when they were lined up behind a door and the Head strode in! My solution: give them space and a place to line up outside. When your class leaves your room, put things they need near the door (like a water bottle), to help them to remember to take it.

If you give them a space outside by labelling the floor, you can stop the squabbles for front of line space. As an added bonus, you can also put them next to children they behave well with! You can bring them into the class in small groups or as a line, to stop the door bottle-neck!

REMEMBER

- *Transitions, when repeated and consistent will get easier*
- *Clearly recount the steps for a transition*
- *Keep your expectations high*
- *Address any issues straight away*

For more ideas and information from Jess, visit jessgoslingearlyyearsteacher.com

