



Transitions and Planning for Change

What is transition and change?

In our daily life we all experience change, such as changing activities, or going to different places. Another word to describe change is transition. Transition is a word often used by schools and other professionals to talk about changes in routine and the ability to stop one activity and start another.

Some people find change and transitions more challenging than others. Young people on the autism spectrum may feel very overwhelmed by the many changes that occur throughout the day, week, month, term and year.

Transitions may appear more difficult on some days or in some places due to other pressures and expectations. Each young person will cope with transitions and change in a different way. Some transitions will require more detailed planning than others.

Examples of transitions

Daily:

- Moving classrooms
- Moving from class to the playground
- Having a change in teacher
- Changes in home routines

Less frequent:

- Moving schools
- School excursions
- Going on holiday

Key milestones:

- Beginning pre-school
- Primary school to high school
- High school to post school options
- Moving out of home

Other:

- Moving house
- New sibling
- Death in the family

What is a transition plan?

A transition plan is a written plan to support changes to routines and/or the environment. It is important to plan for transitions as much as possible to increase student success. Transition plans can be brief or highly detailed, depending on the needs of each individual and the type of transition you are planning. Well developed transition plans may support a young person to successfully manage changes and transitions.



Executive functioning

Executive functions are skills performed by our brain that help us to control and manage our thoughts and actions. Executive functioning skills include how to plan and organise, shift attention from one task to another, think flexibly and self regulate. Executive functioning can have an impact on how a young person copes with changes and transitions.

Orientation vs transition

Many schools offer orientation days or visits. While these can be helpful, they often only occur once or twice. A more extensive transition plan, carried out over multiple visits, might be more appropriate for supporting young people on the autism spectrum when they are transitioning to a new school or environment.

'If your school doesn't have a formal orientation day, maybe you can create your own by visiting the school, talking to teachers, seeing where your locker is and practicing opening it, and getting your schedule early and walking through with your parents'.

Hayley Moss, Middle School:
The Stuff Nobody Tells You About.



Tips for creating successful transition plans

- ✓ Talk with the young person, or the people that support them and find out what has helped them transition and cope with change in the past
- ✓ Consider the young person's strengths, interests and challenges when planning how to approach a transition
- ✓ Discuss with parents/carers, teachers and other support people to find out what might support the transition
- ✓ Take photos of the new environment, the people who will be there and the activities they may be asked to do
- ✓ Use a map of an unfamiliar place and highlight areas of interest to allow the young person to familiarise themselves with the new location
- ✓ Identify a key support person that they can go to if they have a question or need extra support
- ✓ Ensure all people involved in the transition know the plan and the supports required
- ✓ Create any visual supports required
- ✓ Use a diary or calendar to countdown the days/weeks leading up to the change, if this would be calming for the young person
- ✓ Complete the Positive Partnerships Planning Tool to support the planning process