

# Sing your way to smooth transitions

In early childhood education we all put so much time and effort into coming up with experiences that are stimulating, enjoyable, challenging and educational. But what about the time between these experiences? This, at times chaotic, transitional space between parts of the day can not only be made easier for you and the children in your care, but can also offer an opportunity for further learning and development.

With the overall wellbeing of children so crucial to all areas of their ongoing development, it's important to be aware of how we can minimise stress levels for children through managing calm, smooth transitions – essential. "Children who have sustained high stress levels are less able to learn and develop to their potential" (Sims, 2008) as a result of high levels of cortisol or 'stress hormone' in their bodies. Today's children face fast-paced, busy lives and we can all contribute to lowering the anxiety and stress in their days during these pivotal early years.

## Making the transition

It's a special thing to witness when children are particularly enjoying an element of their day, but it's more stressful when you know the time is approaching to move on to something else. What about the morning rush? Children can often arrive at the nursery feeling rushed and tense which leaves

them clinging to mum or dad and potentially disrupting the morning flow in the room. So how do we alleviate the stress of transitions while simultaneously maximising children's learning? Enter: transitional songs.

## What are transitional songs?

Both research and experience support the use of songs to ease children's experience with transitions, keeping in mind that there are several transitions across a standard day. These are the transitions we tend to face each day in settings that can sometimes be challenging for children:

- Home to the settings
- Activity to activity
- Activity to pack up
- Room to room
- Outside to inside



Throughout numerous conversations and surveys, educators have identified three most challenging transitions for the day:

1. Rest time
2. Group time
3. Tidy/pack-away time

At the end of this article, we are sharing a transitional song to tackle each of these routines so you can see how transitional songs can be tailored to individual situations.

## Why use transitional songs?

Before we understand why transitional songs are so important, we need to consider why children sometimes struggle with transitions.

Here are four of the most common problems that can cause transitions to be chaotic:

1. Transitions are rushed
2. Children don't know what is coming next
3. Children are not ready to stop doing what they are doing
4. Children have little or no warning of what is expected of them

**A consistent routine, fortified with music in the form of transitional songs, will solve all of these problems.**

And while routine alone is crucial to a positive environment for children, the incorporation of music in any form – in this case, singing - will always further improve the scenario. At Bonkers Beat Music Kinder, we have seen first-hand the positive impact of singing throughout the day, an experience backed up by many other educators who implement our program in their settings.

Transitional songs can play a pivotal role for a child's development. The time spent struggling to convince children to move on to the next task can be utilised effectively by lowering stress levels during transitions and incorporating singing and its many benefits into children's days.

## Time to rhyme

There has been ample research telling us that children who struggle with rhymes are likely to have difficulties reading (Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry Vol 31, Issue 2, Jan 1990), and this, combined with the countless benefits of music for wellbeing, is surely enough for us to consider how we can use songs in children's day-to-day lives. Transitional songs are a simple, useful and effective way to incorporate songs, rhymes, poems and music into each and every day.

Transitional songs also serve us well in encouraging rote learning through memorisation, which I believe assists children to retain all the information they take in every day, so that they can recall it and apply it when it's needed.

## Tips for using transitional songs

Consistency is key with making transitional songs effective. Use the same song/s at the same time/s to see results. Eventually you may even find children using the songs without prompting.

Make the songs fun – include some actions or fun sounds to make!

In my experience transitional songs seem to work best when the words in the song tell the children what is happening or what they are going to be doing.

Try these musical ideas for the top three most challenging transitions in the day:

1. [Rest time](#)
2. [Group time](#)
3. [Tidy/pack away time](#)

Transitional songs not only ease children in moving from one activity to another, but they are also an enjoyable way of incorporating music and singing into the day and reaping the rewards on children's social and emotional wellbeing. If you are looking for a way to make your day run more smoothly, transitional songs could be the answer.

To find out more about the first music kinder in Australia visit the [Bonkers Beat website](#). To share your ideas and views, visit the [Bonkers Beat Facebook page](#)



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Galina Zenin (B.Mus. Ed., Dip. Teach.) is a presenter, early childhood educator and qualified music and voice training teacher, author, composer and storyteller. She writes her own music and brings to her programs a wealth of European and Australian experience, together with a high level of professionalism.

Her Bonkers Beat® programs are breakthrough, multi-award-winning music and wellbeing programs for early years that enrich the lives of young children and boost settings' occupancy at the same time. They have been introduced in many settings across Australia, empowering educators and enhancing the wellbeing of hundreds of children and families.

Galina is a recipient of the 2015 National Excellence in Teaching Award by Australian Scholarships Group (ASG) and the creator of Bonkers Beat Music & Bonkers Gym Wellbeing Programs. From keynote address to small group workshops, she has inspired audiences on 4 continents and has been widely featured in the national media.

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