

Unnecessary Waiting

Relevant Satellite Accreditation Standards

III. The Daily Program For Children

- E. Transitions throughout the day are calm and relaxed.
- 6. Children are not required to wait unnecessarily.



The Basics

Why is waiting so hard? Young children do not perceive time the same way as adults. This is because episodic memory, or the memory of personal everyday events and past experiences, does not develop until the age of three or four. For this reason, adults cannot remember celebrating their first birthday or learning to walk (also known as childhood amnesia). Very young children do not yet have the language or the sense of self to organize their experiences into personal memories. Waiting can literally feel endless because children are continually learning about time and space. Children's time sensitivity does not begin to mature until between ages eight and ten. It is no surprise then that young children struggle during transition periods or periods of changing from one activity to the next that result in waiting.

How can I reduce waiting in my program? *Necessary waiting* refers to waiting that occurs for health and safety reasons, such as waiting for everyone to put their shoes on before going outside. There are ways caregivers can support children during necessary waiting periods. Caregivers can sing songs, play simple games like Simon Says or I Spy, or give children a job. *Unnecessary waiting* refers to periods of waiting that are avoidable, such as waiting for every child to finish eating before cleaning up. Mitigating periods of unnecessary waiting in your program will result in a calmer atmosphere and smoother transitions. How do you do this? Look at your daily routine. Children do not necessarily need to do everything at the same time. Are there ways you could move from one activity to another more gradually while maintaining supervision? Can any transitions be eliminated? Find more ideas for supporting children's transition between activities and changing the routine to mitigate unnecessary waiting in the resources below.

I want to learn more!

- [Moving Right Along...Planning Transitions to Prevent Challenging Behavior](#) (Article)
- [Helping Children Transition Between Activities](#) (Resource)
- [Transition Strategies for the Early Childhood Classroom](#) (Article)
- [Nap Time is for Letting Go](#) (Article)