

## Language & Learning

### Positive Parenting

#### Keeping Your Child Informed

A positive way to prevent many behavior problems is to keep your baby or toddler informed of what is happening next. Transitions can be particularly hard when babies and toddlers don't know what to expect. A sleeping baby is less likely to be frightened and cry if wakened gently than if an overhead light suddenly flashes on and a huge face looms close over the crib railing. A toddler playing with a toy is likely to stop willingly when the parent holds up a bib and a spoon, saying "Time for lunch!" Parents tell hearing children where they are going in the car, or how much time they have left before it is time to stop a favorite activity. Children who are deaf or hard of hearing want to know that, too. In fact, it is even more important for you to keep your baby informed, because hearing loss can eliminate or reduce many of the other cues to changes in activity, such as bath water running, the car door, the telephone, the doorbell, or someone calling from another room.

Notice that signaling a transition can be as simple as giving an object cue. Hold the rubber ducky and towel and say or sign, "Time for bath." The object cues will help the 12 month old understand what you mean. She will begin to put two and two together to understand the phrase "Time for bath."

Some parents find it helpful to use picture cues to help tots and two year olds understand transitions. They show a picture of grandma and remark, "Let's go to grandma's house." One family put pictures of important places, such as church or synagogue, local grocery, Target, etc. in the car visor. Once the little one was buckled in, the parent would show the child which location they were going to first. This helped the child anticipate and learn the language for important places. As you go regularly to places like church or synagogue, the grocery store, grandma's house, or a restaurant, you can take snapshots of each one to make a notebook or a refrigerator gallery that your baby or toddler can recognize. Gradually, you will be able to say or sign, "We are going to the grocery store. Let's get your coat," and let your child find the picture.

As the child gets a little older, you can use a small, two or three minute hourglass egg timer. Until the language and difficult concept are familiar ("You need to stop in three more minutes," or "Almost time to stop"), the egg timer supports the idea that a transition is about to happen. Then, you can use an object, a gesture, or a familiar word or phrase for the next activity, developing an understanding of "...then we will \_\_\_\_\_."

Keeping your baby informed also means telling what is going on. Sometimes as hearing people, we don't think about subtle ways that we are leaving the deaf child out. For example, when the phone rings you leave your play with the baby and run to get it. Your baby wonders where you went, why you left, and if you are coming back? A simple "I hear the telephone. I'll be right back," will help, especially if the word telephone has been close enough for the child to hear or feel the ringing. The phone may be hard to hear if it is far away. When it rings, tell your baby, "Listen. I hear the phone." Take your baby closer to the phone and give her an opportunity to hear it before you answer. If you have a cellular phone, helping the baby hear the phone will be easy.

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Sometimes the information your baby needs is that a behavior is not appropriate and has consequences. Throwing blocks means that the blocks will be put away. You can warn your baby with gestures, firm headshakes, or simple words, following through the first time your warning is challenged.

**Let's Practice**

What visual strategies could you use to help your child understand what is happening next? Match the event in the left column with the best visual strategy in the right column.

Events	Visual Strategy
Baby is absorbed playing with blocks, but it is time for dinner.	Show the hearing aid and a picture of the clinic. Show the infant's coat and say, "Time to go bye-bye."
Your infant is sleeping, but you need to wake her to go to see the audiologist.	Give your little one a warning. "Two more minutes to read." Turn over the sand timer.
Your two year old does not like bedtime. She likes to stall and keep looking at books.	Hand baby her favorite blanket. Say or sign, "Nap time, sweetie."
Your one year old is having fun in the kitchen. It is time for her nap.	Show the picture of Grandma. Say or sign, "Let's go see grandma. You and me pick up."
Your 18 month old needs to help pick up and get ready to visit Grandma.	Point to the dinner table. Say or sign, "Let's go eat!" Show excitement.