

All Minds Dance Hub  
Inclusive Teaching Resource

# Managing Transitions

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*Supporting regulation, predictability, and emotional safety  
in dance classes*



## What This Supports

These strategies support dancers who may:

- become anxious or overwhelmed during changes
- struggle to switch tasks or disengage from activities
- need extra processing time between exercises
- find unpredictability dysregulating
- show emotional or behavioural responses during transitions

Transitions are not interruptions. They are a **core part of teaching**.

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## Why Transitions Are Challenging

Transitions require dancers to:

- stop one task
- process new information
- shift attention
- regulate sensory input
- understand new expectations

All at once.

For neurodivergent dancers, this can overload executive functioning and trigger stress responses, even when the transition seems minor.

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## Practical Strategies for Managing Transitions

### 1. Use Predictable Class Structure

#### Why it helps

Knowing what comes next reduces anxiety and supports nervous system regulation.

#### What to try

- Keep the same class flow each week
- Use a visual schedule at the start of class
- Refer back to it during transitions

## 2. Give Clear Warnings Before Changes

### Why it helps

Advance notice allows the brain time to prepare.

### What to try

- Use time warnings
- Use consistent phrases
- Give countdowns before transitions

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## 3. Use Consistent Transition Signals

### Why it helps

Consistent cues reduce cognitive load and improve response.

### What to try

- Choose one signal per transition type
- Use the same phrase, sound, or gesture every time
- Allow dancers to respond at their own pace

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## 4. Break Transitions into Small Steps

### Why it helps

Multi-step instructions can be overwhelming.

### What to try

- Give one instruction at a time
- Pause between steps
- Model the action where possible

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## 5. Allow Flexible Transition Timing

### Why it helps

Some dancers need more time to disengage and reset.

### What to try

- Allow dancers to move at their own pace
- Permit brief regulation breaks
- Avoid rushing or penalising slower transitions

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## 6. Use Music to Support Transitions

### Why it helps

Music provides rhythm and predictability.

### What to try

- Use the same short music clip for transitions
- Allow familiarity to build over time
- Pair music with movement or breathing

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## 7. Support Emotional Responses

### Why it helps

Transitions can trigger anxiety or loss of control.

### What to try

- Acknowledge feelings without judgement
- Offer reassurance
- Provide choice where possible

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## 8. Create Predictable Endings

### Why it helps

Endings are also transitions.

### What to try

- End class with the same ritual each time
- Use a consistent closing phrase or movement
- Preview the next class briefly

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### Strengths Transition Support Unlocks

When transitions are supported, dancers often show:

- calmer behaviour
- improved focus
- smoother learning flow
- reduced anxiety
- greater trust in the teacher

Predictable transitions create **emotional safety**.

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### Key Takeaway for Teachers

Transitions are not just about moving from one exercise or class to another. They are about **supporting the nervous system**.

When teachers handle transitions with care and predictability, dancers feel safer, calmer, and more able to learn.