



Now and next

A *now and next* board is a simple visual tool that helps young children understand what is happening **right now** and what will happen **next**, reducing anxiety and supporting smoother transitions. Here's clear, practical guidance you can use at home or in nursery.

What a *now and next* board does

It shows **two pictures**:

- **NOW** – the activity happening at this moment
- **NEXT** – the activity that will follow

This helps children who struggle with changes, waiting, or understanding spoken instructions

Write guidance on how to use a 'now and next' picture sequence with a young child

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How to use it with a young child

1. Introduce it calmly

Sit with the child, show the board, and say something simple like: **“Now we’re doing puzzles. Next we will have snack.”** Keep language short and consistent.

2. Use clear, real-world pictures

Because your child responds well to real object photos, choose images that look like the actual activity (e.g., the child's own cup, their favourite puzzle, the nursery tidy-up basket).

3. Point to each part

Physically point to **NOW**, then **NEXT**. This helps the child link the picture to the routine.

4. Keep the 'next' activity motivating

If the child finds transitions hard, make the **NEXT** something they enjoy (e.g., bubbles, a favourite book). This builds cooperation and reduces resistance.

5. Repeat the wording

Use the same phrase each time: "**Now tidy up... next outside play.**" Predictable language helps understanding.

6. Show the change when 'next' becomes 'now'

When the child moves on, slide the picture over or swap it: "**Now it's outside play.**" Then add a new **NEXT**.

7. Celebrate success

Praise the child for following the sequence: "**You looked at the board and you did it!**" This reinforces the routine.

Tips for making it work well

- Keep the board visible at the child's eye level.
- Use it for tricky moments: tidy-up, leaving the house, toileting, ending screen time.
- Only show **two steps** — more can overwhelm a young child.
- If the child is reluctant, gently guide their hand to point at the pictures with you

