

SCRIPTS/ETIQUETTE FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

1. **Speak in a tone like you would any other child of the same age** (talk to a preschooler like a preschooler and a high schooler like a high schooler)
2. **Say the child's name** any time you are addressing them so they know you are talking to them.
3. **Use clear, concise and literal language.** Avoid the use of idioms, nuances, slang, and sarcasm - as these aren't always easily understood. (Ex: *Let's go over the rules of the game.* "Go over" may not be understood as reviewing the rules. Are you jumping over the rules? Instead be literal and clear. *Let's listen to the rules of the game.*
4. **Avoid value/ability labels.** It's not our place to determine ability or judge behaviors. *"High functioning/ low functioning. Bad behavior. Non-verbal/Verbal. Non-typical/Typical"* These are words still used by medical professionals and some caregivers that individuals with special needs have said **hurt them** and make them feel **less than**. Instead of high-functioning/low functioning - we address the specific and unique needs all children have. Instead of bad behavior we recognize that behavior is communication. Instead of the label of non-verbal - we address one of the specific and unique communication challenges/needs a child may have. Instead of typical/non-typical we recognize that everyone is beautifully and wonderfully made by God.

TRANSITIONAL LANGUAGE

Helps establish timing of activities, eases anxiety by helping a child know what is coming next, helps establish expectations, and keeps us as teachers on track as well!

First this _____ then that _____. (Next, After, Before, etc.)

- Avoid phrases such as "in a minute", "one moment", or "just a sec" as they usually mean "soon" but might be taken literally to mean one minute or one second.
- Avoid vague time references such as "soon", "later", or "around a certain time."
- Keep steps clear and simple. Try to keep to 2-3 steps at a time.

Examples:

Instead of "we're going to do the craft around 10:45"

Try "First we are going to watch this video. Then we will do the craft."

Instead of "we'll play the game in a sec, I need to go over the instructions."

Try "Before we play a game, we first need to listen to the instructions."

COUNTING DOWN AS A TRANSITION

Note: When doing a countdown please use a timer (either on your phone or using the visual timer in the fidget box). Reiterate 1 or more times how much time is left on the timer.

“We’re going to play this activity for 2 more minutes - then we’re going to sit back down in our chairs for the lesson.” “Ok one more minute - then we’re going to sit back down in our chairs for the lesson.”

Make the transition fun!

“We’re going to play this activity for 2 more minutes - then we’re going to hop on one foot back to our chairs for the lesson.” “Ok one more minute - then remember to hop on one foot to your chairs”

STRUGGLING TO TRANSITION

Transition with a choice

“I know this (name of activity) is a lot of fun - but it is time for the lesson and this activity might distract the other kids from hearing the lesson. Would you like to (offer alternative quiet activity to do during lesson) or you can hold onto this (piece of the activity) during the lesson and can continue after the lesson is over.”

OTHER SCRIPTS

For when a group or the whole class needs to help make an accommodation for a peer (example used for a child that is sensitive to loud noises):

“We have a friend in class [do not single out the specific individual] that is sensitive to loud noises - that means loud noises that might not bother you - hurt their ears a lot. For this activity instead of talking and yelling loudly, because we love all our friends here, let’s try whisper yelling. *demonstrate* Now you try.”

Talking to a parent

Hi. I first want to let you know that I love having (name of child) in our class. He/she is such a joy. And I want him to continue to be in my class because we love him/her. We’ve been noticing that (name of child) is having trouble with _____. We were wondering if you had any insight as to why, and how we can help meet his/her needs better because again we love having him/her in class.