

After-School Transition Routine Template

Your Customizable Guide to Supporting
Nervous System Transitions



Part of the "Tools, Templates & Guides"
Collection

How to Use This Template

Start here: This template is designed to be customized for YOUR family's unique needs. You're not trying to implement everything at once - you're creating a personalized roadmap based on what your child's nervous system is actually communicating.

First week

Focus on observation. Use the "Reading Their Nervous System State" section to notice patterns without trying to change anything yet.

Second week

Choose **1-2 support strategies** that match your child's most common after-school pattern. Small changes, big impact.

Ongoing

Adjust based on what works. Every nervous system is different, and your child's needs may change over time.

- ❏ **Remember:** This is about supporting natural nervous system function, not forcing a specific outcome. Some days will be smooth, others won't - both are normal and healthy.

Before Your Child Arrives Home

Setting up your space for nervous system success

Lighting

- ☐ Dim overhead lights or turn them off completely
- ☐ Turn on soft lamps or natural lighting
- ☐ Open curtains/blinds for natural light (if available)

My child's lighting preference: _____

Sound Environment

- ☐ Reduce background noise (TV, radio, dishwasher)
- ☐ Prepare calming background music (if helpful for your child)

My child's sound needs: _____

Physical Space Setup

- ☐ Clear a movement space (living room floor, hallway)
- ☐ Set out comfort items (blankets, stuffed animals, fidgets)
- ☐ Prepare quiet retreat space (bedroom, reading nook)

My child's space preferences: _____

Snack Preparation

- ☐ Have protein + complex carb ready (blood sugar impacts regulation)
- ☐ Water bottle filled (dehydration affects nervous system)

My child's after-school snack favorites:

The First Five Minutes

Your child's nervous system is transitioning from "performance mode" to "authentic mode"

Your Approach

- ☐ Take three deep breaths before they walk in (regulate your own nervous system first)
- ☐ Greet them warmly but without overwhelming questions

My greeting approach: _____

Reading Their Nervous System State

Look for these clues in the first few minutes:

High Energy/Seeking:

- Can't sit still, climbing, bouncing
- Seeking intense sensations
- Talking rapidly or making lots of noise

Brain message: "Need movement to organize sensory information"

Low Energy/Depleted:

- Slumped posture, tired eyes
- Wants to lie down immediately
- Quiet, subdued responses

Brain message: "Need restoration and gentle connection"

Emotional/Activated:

- Big emotions about small things
- Tears, anger, or frustration
- Seems overwhelmed by simple questions

Brain message: "Processing delayed emotions from today"

Withdrawn/Overstimulated:

- Avoids eye contact
- Retreats to room immediately
- Seems sensitive to lights, sounds

Brain message: "Need sensory break and reduced stimulation"

My Child's Typical Pattern:

Most common after-school state: _____ **Secondary pattern:** _____

Signs to watch for: _____

Support Options Menu

Choose based on what their nervous system is communicating

For Movement/Seeking Needs

- ☐ Jump on trampoline (or couch cushions)
- ☐ Dance party to favorite songs
- ☐ Wall pushes (hands against wall, push hard)
- ☐ Heavy work (carry groceries, move furniture)
- ☐ Outdoor play (if weather permits)

What works for my child: _____

For Restoration/Depletion Needs

- ☐ Quiet snuggle time
- ☐ Gentle back rubs or pressure
- ☐ Soft blanket and comfort item
- ☐ Dim lighting and calm space
- ☐ Simple, nourishing snack

What works for my child: _____

For Emotional Processing Needs

- ☐ "I see you had a big day" acknowledgment
- ☐ Space to feel without fixing
- ☐ Comfort items nearby
- ☐ No demands for conversation
- ☐ Patient presence while emotions move through

What works for my child: _____

For Overstimulation/Withdrawal Needs

- ☐ Quiet, dim space
- ☐ Minimal talking from adults
- ☐ Noise-canceling headphones (if helpful)
- ☐ Time alone in comfort space
- ☐ Gentle check-ins without demands

What works for my child: _____

The Transition Flow

Your family's customized routine

Step 1: Initial Connection (First 0–5 minutes)

Our approach

Step 2: Nervous System Check-in (Minutes 5–10)

What I'll observe:

Step 3: Regulation Support (Minutes 10–30)

Movement options to offer:

Quiet options to offer:

Connection options to offer:

Step 4: Gradual Re-engagement (After 30+ minutes)

How I'll know they're regulated:

How I'll introduce homework/chores/family time:

Family Customization Notes

Multiple Children

Different nervous systems = different needs

1

Child 1 (Name: _____):

Typical after-school pattern:

Best support strategies: _____

2

Child 2 (Name: _____):

Typical after-school pattern:

Best support strategies: _____

When their needs conflict:

- Movement child gets: _____
- Quiet child gets: _____
- How we manage parallel support: _____

Difficult Days Modifications

For days when everything feels harder

When I'm depleted too:

- Simplified version: _____
- Emergency regulation: _____
- Getting help: _____

When child is extra dysregulated:

- Extended transition time: _____
- Extra support needed: _____
- When to pause routine: _____

Language to Use

Celebrating what their brain IS doing

1

Instead of: "Why are you so hyper?"

Try: "Your brain needs movement right now - where should you get that movement?"

2

Instead of: "Calm down and tell me about your day"

Try: "I can see you had a big day. Take the time you need."

3

Instead of: "You're fine at school, why are you falling apart here?"

Try: "Your brain worked so hard at school. Home is where you can finally relax."

4

Instead of: "Stop being dramatic"

Try: "Your feelings make sense. Your nervous system is processing a lot."

My family's regulation language:

Weekly Check-ins

Adjusting based on what's working

What's working well: