

Supporting Group Clean-Up Time

Relevant Satellite Accreditation Standards

III. The Daily Program for Children

E. Transitions throughout the day are calm and relaxed.

5. At clean-up times, the provider has clear expectations for children based on their abilities and gives positive assistance when needed.



Hundred Acre Play Care



Learn N Play Family Child Care



Ms. Julia's Schoolia

The Basics

Group clean-up time is an opportunity for children to cooperate and help one another to organize the learning environment. Educators (and families) vary in their expectations and beliefs around how, why, and when to encourage cleaning after oneself. Educators may use group clean-up time within their curriculum to support children in practicing responsibility, teamwork, self-regulation, and helping behavior (Selman & Dilworth-Bart, 2023).

Why focus on clean-up time? Children need predictable routines with consistent expectations to successfully transition through clean-up time. *Adult scaffolding* during clean-up tasks increases action-based helping for younger toddlers and empathetic helping for older toddlers and preschoolers (Pettygrove et al., 2013). Educators scaffold children's cleaning effort by doing the following.

Strategy	Example
Model	"I see the playdough needs to be put away. I'll do it! I know where it goes."
Provide choices	"Would you like to start with the animals or the cars?"
Offer help	"What can I do to help you?"
Be emotionally responsive	"It feels hard to be done. You can handle this."

Use directive statements “Place the blocks on the block shelf.”

Foreshadow “First we clean, then we play outside.”

[How can I support clean-up time?](#) Responsive, intentional educators support children before, during, and after clean-up time.

Before...

- ensure every item has a place (or home) in the program.
- label shelves and bins with clear visuals to help children independently return materials.
- consider the schedule and whether clean-up transitions can be minimized.
- practice with children using playful games, such as asking a child, “Where does this belong?”
- notify children in advance of an approaching clean-up time.
- use a visual timer to quantify the amount of time left in play.
- play/sing a consistent song or sound to signal the transition.

During...

- scaffold children’s participation using the strategies outlined in the previous section.
- keep your expectations consistent and developmentally appropriate.

After...

- recognize children’s cooperation to keep their program safe and clean.

[I want to learn more!](#)

- [6 Ways to Make Clean Up More Fun! \(Article\)](#)
- [Developing Young Children’s Self-Regulation through Everyday Experiences \(Article\)](#)
- [Parental socialization and children's early prosocial behavior \(Research article\)](#)