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# Closing an Open-Ended Activity

## For Children with Autism

High-quality early childhood programs provide opportunities for children to observe, experiment, and problem-solve through the activities in learning centers. For most children, this is a time when the child works at their own pace and processes learning as needed. Teachers are encouraged to allow children to stay at a center as long as they would like to complete the task they are trying to accomplish. However, for some children, particularly those with autism spectrum disorder, a more defined plan of work is needed for them to participate successfully.

Children on the autism spectrum tend to like a specified beginning, middle, and end for an activity. They like to know what they are expected to do and when they will be finished. While children are all different, there are a few general strategies you can apply that may help your child with autism complete center activities more independently:

- Provide a mini schedule for the activity. This could be a small set of picture cards arranged in order that show the child the steps of the activity. This lets them know the progression of what they should be doing and when they will finish.
- Put all needed items for an activity in a small basket or bin. This lets the child know what they will use for the activity. When they have used all the items, they are finished.
- Program a multi-step voice output device with instructions for the activity. The child pushes the button to get the first instruction. When they complete that step, they hit the button again for the next step in the instructions.

Please keep in mind these are just suggestions, and that no single strategy will work for every child. Some students with autism may not need any accommodation at all to work successfully in centers. Get to know your students and be willing to do some trial and error. Helping students succeed can take time, but it is definitely worth the effort.

