

The Landing Spot Routine

A calm way for quiet students to enter the classroom

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Developing practice routine

At a glance

1. Offer a familiar place.
2. Look around together.
3. Help the student choose a first activity.
4. Remain available as they join.

Some students walk into class ready to talk. Others pause at the door, holding a backpack like a safety anchor, unsure of how to join the room. For a multilingual learner or a student getting to know an unfamiliar classroom, a little time to look around may make the first step easier.

The Landing Spot Routine offers a predictable, low-pressure way to start the day. Set aside about two minutes, using a place already available in the room. Some students will need more time or a different kind of support. The purpose is to offer a manageable way to enter and choose what comes next, without making speech the price of joining.

Quietness alone does not tell a teacher whether a student feels worried, is processing language, prefers to observe, or needs help with something else. Begin with a welcome, remain curious, and use what the student and family share to adapt the routine.

What You Will Need

Choose one accessible place near the entrance, within the supervised classroom and clear of the doorway. No special purchase is needed. Depending on the room and the student, the place might be:

- a small rug square;
- a cushion or familiar chair;
- a marked space on the floor;
- a standing place beside a desk or another agreed arrival point.

Keep the location consistent when it remains useful. If it must change, show the student the new place before arrival where possible. The spot is an invitation, not a required seat, a time-out, or a place to wait until the student performs a greeting.

Step 1: Introduce the Spot

On the first morning, greet the student without a series of questions. Offer a simple phrase: “First, we can sit here together. Then we look around.” If sitting does not suit the student, offer standing nearby or going straight to an activity.

Stay beside them for about a minute, if that is welcome, and slowly draw attention to what is available: “The blocks are open today.” “The art table is ready.” “I see books on the carpet.” Pause between comments so the student can look, point, ask, or simply take in the room.

There is no request for speech. You are offering orientation, not demand, and making the next step clearer. A gesture, a picture, a familiar language, or a short written choice may make that invitation easier to understand.

Step 2: Fade Your Support

When the student seems familiar with the routine, offer a little more space while remaining available. Instead of sitting together, sit or stand nearby. Keep the sequence recognizable: “First, you can settle here. Then we look around.”

Your presence becomes lighter, but the welcome stays the same. Ask or show the student how to request your company again. There is no day by which independence must appear; some students may choose the spot quickly, while others may prefer company for longer or decide that another arrival routine works better.

If the student begins to hesitate more, check what has changed. A different adult, activity, language demand, or peer interaction may matter. Returning to closer support is a response to the moment, not a loss of progress.

Step 3: Let the Routine Become Familiar

As the student looks around and considers joining, you might notice shoulders lowering, eyes moving toward an activity, a hand loosening around a backpack, or a step toward materials. These are observations to explore, not proof of an internal state. A student may also be ready to join without showing any of these changes.

Offer a choice the student can act on: “Books or blocks?” “Would you like to begin here or at the table?” Allow a response through pointing, movement, a communication device, or words. If the student moves toward an activity, help make the entry possible rather than asking for a spoken explanation first.

Instead of praising talking, name the participation privately and naturally: “You looked around and chose blocks.” That response tells the student that a choice has been noticed, even when it arrives without words.

Teacher Language

Simple scripts that may help

- “You can sit first. That is okay.”
- “I can stay with you for a minute.”
- “You are watching the activity. You can join when you are ready, and I can help.”
- “You picked the art table.”
- “Would you like me nearby, or would you like some space?”

Phrases to reconsider during arrival

- “Say good morning.”
- “Use your words.”
- “Why are you standing there?”
- “Go talk to your friends.”

A greeting can still be warm and welcoming when the reply is a wave, a nod, or no immediate response. Offer a manageable way to join while keeping ordinary opportunities for conversation and supported language learning available.

Why This Routine May Help

A classroom can present many things at once: people, language, materials, movement, and uncertainty about what to do first. The routine narrows that first decision to a familiar sequence: settle, observe, and choose. Its practical aim is to make the next action clearer.

Predictable routines and responsive adult support are established considerations in guidance on transitions. They provide a rationale for trying a consistent arrival point, but they do not establish that this particular routine will reduce stress or increase speech for every student.

Safety, understanding, and expression can influence one another; they do not form a fixed sequence that every multilingual learner follows. A student may speak while uncertain, feel comfortable while remaining quiet, or need explicit teaching as well as a welcoming routine. Let the student’s experience guide the adjustment.

What to Notice

Watch for small actions that help describe how the student enters the activity:

- moving a few inches closer to the group;
- pointing to an activity without speaking;
- watching peers and then joining;
- touching or referring to the picture schedule;
- whispering a word or using a familiar language;
- placing a block in another student's hand.

These actions can be ways of joining or communicating. Record the action and its context without deciding too quickly what it means. Looking toward a group is not the only sign of attention, and eye contact should not be required. The student's own explanation may add something the observation missed.

Troubleshooting

If the student does not want to sit

Offer proximity instead of a direction: "I will sit here. You can look around." Let the student stand, use a different seat, or choose another way to enter. The routine should fit the student's access needs and preferences.

If the student stays without joining

Draw attention to a concrete option: "Blocks are open. I see green and blue." Then offer help with the first action: "Would you like to carry one with me?" Check whether the activity, directions, sensory conditions, or peer situation needs attention. Avoid leaving the student indefinitely on the edge of instruction.

If other students join

When space and supervision allow, welcome them. A shared arrival option can become an ordinary classroom routine. Keep the entrance clear and offer another place if a group makes the original spot less useful for the student.

Try It for One Week

Choose one student and one arrival period. Keep a brief record of what happened, how you responded, and what followed. Include days when nothing changed. The example below is constructed to show how to write a factual note; it is not a reported outcome or an expected five-day progression.

Illustrative week: a constructed example

Day	What happened	How the teacher responded
Mon	Stood near the door.	Offered to sit together; the student sat nearby.
Tue	Looked around the room.	Named two available activities and waited.
Wed	Moved toward the blocks.	Said, “You chose blocks,” and made space to join.
Thu	Whispered “art.”	Said, “You can go there,” and checked access to materials.
Fri	Chose the spot without a prompt, then joined an activity.	Stayed available without adding another direction.

At the end of the week

Ask when joining became easier, harder, or stayed the same. Note what changed in the room, how much prompting was offered, and what the student communicated. A shorter wait or a quieter body may be worth noticing, but neither establishes why a change occurred.

When It May Be Worth Trying

Consider the routine when a student has difficulty finding a way into the classroom or its first activity. This may include a new arrival, a multilingual learner navigating unfamiliar instructions, a student who speaks privately but becomes quiet in groups, a cautious student, or anyone adjusting after a significant transition. Offer it in response to the individual situation, rather than assuming that everyone in a category needs it.

Adapting it for older students

Use an ordinary, age-respectful arrival point: a desk, a quiet place to read the opening task, or a brief check-in with a choice of how to begin. Agree privately on the routine and avoid giving the student a conspicuous special seat. The same principle applies: a clear first step, an available adult, and a way to enter the learning.

Closing

Sometimes a child’s first brave action is not speech. It is sitting near the door, looking around, and choosing where to begin. An older student may open the task, point to a question, or join a partner before saying anything to the class.

You do not need to know everything that quiet moment means in order to respond with care. Make room for the choice, help the student enter the activity, and keep listening. The invitation is simple: “You do not have to perform a greeting to belong here.”

One-Week Arrival Record

Choose one student and one arrival period. Record observable actions, the student’s own communication, the response offered, and what followed. Include days when nothing changed. A shorter wait or more speech is not the required outcome.

At the end of the week, ask: when did joining become easier, harder, or stay the same? What changed in the room? How much adult company or prompting was offered? What should stay, change, or be checked with the student or family?

Practice basis and limits

This author-developed routine draws on the general value of predictable transitions, individual flexibility, and responsive relationships. It has not been evaluated as an intervention and cannot identify a student’s emotional or neurological state. Continue appropriate instruction, assessment, and established supports when concerns persist.

Head Start: Supporting Transitions Both Big and Small supports the general rationale. It does not validate or endorse the Landing Spot Routine.

You don’t have to perform to belong.

Landing Spot Routine: One-Week Arrival Record

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Use a learner code and keep completed records private. Use brief entries; for longer notes, use the online record and print it. This practice record is not a scored assessment.

Learner code, grade, observer, and week

Keep completed records private.

Monday: arrival, response, and what followed

Record observable actions, communication, the invitation, and adult support.

Tuesday: arrival, response, and what followed

Record observable actions, communication, the invitation, and adult support.

Wednesday: arrival, response, and what followed

Record observable actions, communication, the invitation, and adult support.

Thursday: arrival, response, and what followed

Record observable actions, communication, the invitation, and adult support.

Friday: arrival, response, and what followed

Record observable actions, communication, the invitation, and adult support.

End-of-week reflection

What became easier, harder, or stayed the same? What will you keep, change, or discuss?