Parenting After Separation

Children's Changeover Checklist

Practical and emotional preparation for every handover

Inside you'll find:

- What to pack (by age group)
- How to prepare kids emotionally
- Handover day scripts
- After-changeover settling tips

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Why Changeovers Matter

Changeovers are one of the most emotionally loaded moments in a child's post-separation life. They mark a visible transition between two worlds. The more calm and consistent you can make this moment, the better your children will adjust over time.

From Jasmin's practice

> *'What parents often tell me is that it's not the big things that stress children, it's the small things. Forgetting the school bag. Arriving late. Tense body language at the door. This checklist is designed to take the guesswork out of it.'*

The Packing Checklist

Category	0–5 years	6–12 years	Teenagers
Clothing	Enough outfits, pyjamas, weather-appropriate layers, nappies/pull-ups if needed	Enough outfits, pyjamas, sports/activity gear, school uniform if needed	Clothing they've chosen, toiletries they prefer, chargers
School / learning	N/A	School bag & books, homework, library books, lunch box	Laptop/tablet, assignments, study materials
Comfort items	Favourite toy or comfort object, dummy if used, familiar blanket	Special toy or book, any comfort item	Phone (charged), headphones, personal items
Health	Medication (clearly labelled), medical information, doctor's contact	Medication, medical info, any equipment	Medication, health apps/info, emergency contacts
Activities	Nappy bag, pram if needed	Sports equipment, musical instrument	Sports gear, work uniform if applicable

Preparing Your Child Emotionally

The days before - what to do

Give a gentle heads-up

Children feel safer when they know what's coming. A few days before the changeover, mention it casually and warmly, something like: "You're going to Mum's/Dad's on Friday - is there anything special you'd like to take with you?"

This gives your child time to mentally prepare without building it up into a big event. Keep your tone light and matter of fact. The way you frame it sends a powerful signal: this is normal, this is okay, and you are okay.

Keep your feelings to yourself

This one can be genuinely hard - and I say that with real compassion. Changeovers can stir up grief, anxiety, loneliness, or frustration for the parent staying behind. But children are remarkably attuned to our emotional state, and when they sense that you're sad or tense, they often feel responsible for it.

They may become clingy, distressed, or reluctant to go - not because they don't want to see the other parent, but because they don't want to leave you.

If you're finding changeovers emotionally difficult, that's completely understandable. Process those feelings with a friend, a therapist, or in a journal - just not in front of your child. The gift you give them by holding it together in that moment is enormous.

Avoid scheduling conflicts

Transitions are always harder when children are tired, over-stimulated, or being pulled away from something fun. Try not to schedule playdates, parties, or big activities in the hours right before a changeover. A calm, unhurried lead-up makes a real difference. If your child is well-rested and the morning (or afternoon) has been low-key, the handover tends to go much more smoothly — for everyone.

On the day - what to say

> *"I'm going to miss you, and I can't wait to hear all about it when you're back."*

> *"Mum/Dad is looking forward to seeing you."*

> *"I love you so much. See you [specific day]."*

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A final note: children take their emotional cues from us. When we approach changeovers with calm confidence, even when it's practiced rather than felt, they learn to do the same. It gets easier over time, for both of you.

After the Changeover: Settling In

Children sometimes need time to re-regulate after a transition. This is normal and does not mean the changeover went badly.

Age group	What to expect	What helps
0–5	Clinginess, tears at reunion, brief regression	Familiar routine, quiet time, physical closeness
6–12	Quiet withdrawal or over-excitement, complaints about 'the other house'	Don't take the bait - acknowledge feelings without probing. Return to routine quickly.
Teenagers	Seeming disengaged, irritability, testing boundaries	Low-key presence. Avoid interrogating. Let them settle before any conversations.

My Personal Changeover Checklist

Add anything specific to your family situation:

Items I always need to remember:

Things that help my child settle:

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Things to avoid:

For deeper support with changeovers and co-parenting, explore Jasmin's online courses at parentingafterseparation.com.au