

Participation 101

Change Rooms

Change rooms are a necessary part of many extracurricular and school activities, including skating, hockey, dance and gym class. While some children and young adults are fine in change rooms, there are many things about this environment that can be stressful and overwhelming. Change rooms can be very noisy with talking among friends and coaches, showers and other water running, locker doors closing, and perhaps even pre-event music playing. Depending on the size of the change room, it may also be crowded, with many strong smells. Because you know your child well, it is important to think of the change room environment before the activity starts in case your child could benefit from some of the tips below. A positive change room experience can set the stage for successful participation in the actual activity.

Here is a list of some change room tips for your consideration and some room to add your own ideas.

- Visit the change room before the activity starts and talk about a plan. You and your child could think about how the change room routine will go, and what decisions will need to be made (e.g., where you will put your belongings, will you take a shower before and/or after the activity, what equipment and supplies are needed in the change room).
- Consider coming to the activity either fully or partially dressed. This example may work well for activities like hockey, skating, dance and karate.
- Use the family change room if available and consider transitioning to the main change room when your child feels comfortable.
- Use a simple visual schedule to help your child to anticipate and to learn the steps involved in preparing for the activity, and coping in the change room.
- Arrive several minutes earlier than other children participating in the activity, when it may be quieter in the change room, and your child has the opportunity to choose where he or she will get ready.
- Connect with the instructor to help them to understand that the change room can be a challenging environment for your child.
- Consider making recommendations to your instructor or to the program coordinator that would benefit your child and other children to cope in the change room. These recommendations may include specifics about accessibility.

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Other tips and ideas to try:

- _____
- _____
- _____

If you are concerned about the physical accessibility of a change room and/or facility and would like to gather more information prior to enrolling or attending an activity, please refer to tip sheet "Participation 101: Accessibility" available on the Participation Knowledge Hub.

A Resource from *CanChild's* Participation Knowledge Hub
<https://www.canchild.ca/en/research-in-practice/participation-knowledge-hub>