Clean-up Time Strategies

1. **By Numbers**: Call out a number or have the children pull a number out of a basket. Children pick up the number of items indicated and then go to the carpet to hear or pull another number.

2. **By Color**: Call out a color or have the children pull a color sample out of a basket. Children pick up items according to that color. When they cannot find any more items of that color, call out another color or have the children pull another sample.

3. **Fruit Basket Pick-up**: All children gather at the carpet to begin. Children are going to listen to you say words, when they hear you say the name of a fruit – they will go clean up until told to “fall and freeze in the fruit basket”. When everyone is frozen in the fruit basket, start calling out words again, they should begin cleaning when they hear you say another fruit word. The game continues until the room is clean. You can play this game by using vegetables also.

4. **By Rhyme**: Tell the children that they are going to listen for a word that rhymes with the word you provide – name a few words that do not rhyme and then say a rhyming word. When they hear that word, they should pick up a specific number of toys and then gather at the carpet, to listen for the next set of rhyming words.

5. **Partner Pick-up**: Children choose or adults assign partners. The children clean together. Extend this activity by providing each pair of partners one basket to put toys into.

6. **Cockroach Clean-up**: Explain to the children that a cockroach is a bug that works at night (when it's dark) and sleeps during the day (when it's light). Tell the children they are going to clean like cockroaches – when the lights are on they can hide or pretend to sleep and when the lights are off, they should be cleaning. Turn the lights on and off based on their cleaning interest – if they are cleaning well, allow them to continue cleaning. If they are not cleaning, turn the lights on for them to “hide”, regroup and restart.

7. **Repetitive Word Clean-up**: Choose a book that has repetitive words and/or phrases. Tell the children that you are going to read them a story during Clean-up Time and that they will need to get up and clean when they hear a specific word/phrases (it helps to give them a specific number of toys to put away – “when you hear the word next time, you will need to put away 5 items and come back to the carpet”). Continue this process until the room is clean.

8. **Flashlight Clean-up**: Tell the children that you are going to clean with the lights off, so that you can use a flashlight. Shine the flashlight on the areas or the items that need to be cleaned. Extend the activity by allowing the children to shine the flashlight.

9. **Hands & Knees**: Clean up on their hands and knees.

10. **Assembly Line**: Clean by area. Line the children up in the area. Hand an item to the first child and have them pass it down the line, the last child puts the item away and the first child moves to the end of the line. With big groups of children, break into two smaller groups and clean two (or more) areas at once.

11. **Baskets**: Provide the children with baskets. Tell them to fill the baskets with toys. Once their basket is filled, they put those items away. Extend the activity by asking them to switch baskets with their friends and put those items away instead.

12. **Simon Says**: Play Simon Says. Consider using prompts like: Simon Says pick up items... on the tile floor, that are a specific color, that are a specific size, that are a specific shape, that are heavy/light, wide/narrow, under tables, etc.

13. **Race the Radio**: Tell the children that there are a lot (or a few) toys out and as a result, their goal is to clean up before a specific number of songs are played. At the conclusion of each song, remind the children how many more songs they have to finish cleaning.

14. **Go Shopping**: Tell the children that they are going to spend their Clean-up Time shopping. Children can partner up or work independently. They will fill a bag. Then they work together (or independently) to put the items in their bag away.

15. **Small Group Race**: Each Small Group has specific areas of the room that they are in charge of cleaning. The groups clean their areas as quickly as possible, in order to do so before the other group. You can do this activity one area at a time or multiple areas at a time – it's best to introduce this activity doing one area at a time.