

A Better Night Sleep: Tips and Tricks

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Bedtime can be a stressful time for many families. You are not alone! Here are some tips surrounding the bedtime routine to help bedtime run smoothly.

1. **Get your child involved** and on board with the routine. Work with your child to make a plan for the night and stick to it.
2. Keep it **mostly predictable but not so rigid** that if there is a change, this will lead to upset. For example, some nights you may read one book, some nights you may read two! Some nights you may do bath then say goodnight to the dog, other nights you might say goodnight to the dog and then take a bath!
3. **Stay consistent.** Whatever you decide for that night (ie. Tonight, we are doing one book), follow through. Your child may still push this but stay consistent!
4. **Include activities that are calming for your child** (reading, bathing, rocking, etc.). Your occupational therapist can assist with choosing these activities, as well as activities to promote regulation throughout the day.
5. **Put your child to bed when they are drowsy but not asleep so they can learn to self-regulate.**
6. **Keep a consistent start time for the bedtime routine.** This will not only assist with the transition to the routine, it will also lead to a consistent bedtime which promotes better sleep.
7. **Limit screen time for at least 1-2 hours before bedtime.** Screen time negatively affects the release of melatonin in our bodies, necessary for falling asleep.
8. For older children who have busy minds while trying to fall asleep, **introduce the ABC sleeping game.** Think of a category (food, sea animals, etc.) and go through the alphabet naming one item per letter in that category. This will give their busy little mind something to think about without keeping them up due to worries!
9. **Keep a sleep log.** Record when your child slept and if they woke at all. Look for patterns such as waking on nights after having a larger dinner, difficulty falling asleep on soccer nights, or later bedtimes on the weekends. This will help identify what works and what doesn't work for your child falling and staying asleep.
10. **Have a plan.** If they get out of bed, have a consistent plan for getting them back into bed. For example, walk them back and tell them "goodnight, see you in the morning!" then turn off the light.