



Helpful Tips for Bedtime

Advice for parents and carers from The Sleep Charity



A bedtime routine is important in getting a good night's sleep. A routine helps to support a child's body clock and aid relaxation.

Feeling relaxed is important in the run up to bedtime for both parent and child. If your child is experiencing difficulties sleeping it can make you both feel anxious. Youngsters often pick up on stress levels around them, so it is important to create a relaxing and calm environment as bedtime approaches.

Here are some helpful tips to create a relaxing bedtime routine for your child:

- A bedtime routine is important for all ages and a regular routine will help children relax and get ready for bed. Try to start the routine at the same time every night as it helps to support your child's body clock, meaning they are likely to nod off more quickly.
- Set aside time earlier during the day to allow your child to share any worries with you. It can be helpful to share how their day has been and what is planned for the next day. Make sure to give them your full attention.
- Dim the lights in the hour before bed to encourage the production of melatonin, this will help to promote that sleepy feeling.
- Looking at screens can make it harder to fall asleep. So turn off an hour before bedtime, this includes television, laptops, tablets and mobile phones. Screen activities can be mentally stimulating and may also inhibit the production of melatonin, the sleep hormone that helps us to feel drowsy.
- Bedtime role-playing can help children mentally prepare for bedtime. Try letting your child put their Elmer or other toys to bed, tucking them in and saying 'Goodnight'.
- Younger children may enjoy a bedtime box, filled with a selection of activities to carry out during the routine. Hand eye co-ordination activities such as jigsaws, colouring and threading are great for promoting relaxation, such as an Elmer colouring sheet. Older children may prefer to read, play a board game or take part in a craft activity.
- A bath half an hour before bed can help to promote sleep, the decrease in body temperature after a bath can help your child to nod off more easily.
- Massage can help some children to unwind as can mindfulness or simple breathing exercises. Imagine breathing in a beautiful white light and blowing out any worries or troubles each time they exhale. Breathing exercises are also useful for parents to carry out and are a great exercise to enjoy together.
- There's no better way to end the day than snuggled up in bed with a bedtime story – and it's never too early to start reading to your child. Make it part of their bedtime from being very young. It helps develop listening, concentration and vocabulary skills. It's also a great way to spend time with your child before bed.
- Children love predictability so don't be afraid to have one or two books that you use frequently at bedtime – they love the repetition.
- Why not consider making up a story about one of your child's favourite book characters? You can even get your child to make up a story too – it's great for the imagination! If you've read **Elmer and the Bedtime Story** you can have a go at making up stories to go with the titles mentioned by the jungle animals (e.g. 'The Story of the Vanishing Biscuit').
- Don't forget to end the day on a positive note by sharing 5 great things that have happened during the day.



The Sleep Charity provides advice and support to empower the nation to sleep better. Find out more: thesleepcharity.org.uk

