

# Top Tips for Getting Your Child to Bed

## Establish a Bedtime Routine

A regular bedtime routine will help your child prepare for sleep. A bedtime routine should include: a bath/shower, time with mum/dad or quiet time, teeth, toilet, a story, then lights out. Make sure you discuss the new bedtime routine with your child before you implement it.

## Be Consistent

Stick to your new evening routines as consistently as possible for a few weeks before you consider any changes. The more consistent you are with the order and timing of your routine, the sooner you will see positive change. Children thrive with routine and a consistent bedtime

## Have Special Time with Mum or Dad Before Bed

Bedtime means separating from a parent and some children struggle with this. Help your child by setting aside 10-30 minutes to do something special with them before bed. Avoid watching action shows, reading scary books, rough and tumble play, or any other activities that will excite your child and choose calming, soothing activities instead.

## Give a Bedtime Warning

Young children find it difficult to transition between tasks and this can be a cause of tantrums. Avoid this by giving your child warnings 15 and 5 minutes before bedtime. At the end of the 15 minutes ask your child to stop their activity and get ready for bed.

## Pre-empt Excuses

Children are highly skilled at generating excuses to delay bedtime. Go over your child's usual excuses before you leave their room. For example, say to your child – Do you need a drink? Have you said goodnight to everyone? Have you been to the toilet? Pre-empting your child's excuses will remove this as a barrier to bedtime.

## Set up a Rewards Chart

If your child's bedtime behaviour is longstanding you may need to set up a rewards chart. Before you leave the room, remind your child that if they stay in bed they will get a sticker or a reward from their rewards chart in the morning but if they leave their bed you will not answer their questions and they will not get a reward.

## Avoid Conversation After Lights Outs

If your child leaves their bedroom after lights out, ignore their requests and gently lead them back to their bed without conversation. If they refuse to go back to bed, gently carry them. If your child comes into your bedroom in the middle of the night, return them to their bed. Settle your child quickly and leave the room.

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TOP TIPS

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## Bedtime Behaviour

**For most parents, bedtime is a challenging time of day. Most kids hate going to bed and they excel in stalling tactics. Your child's bedtime antics can be due to more serious issues, like separation anxiety or lagging self-regulation skills, but generally occur because of a fear of missing out.**

**When your child refuses to stay in their own bed, it's easy to fall into the trap of letting them sleep in your bed. Letting your child sleep with you might help you catch up on some sleep, but it also encourages their bedtime antics.**

**There are a number reasons why it's good for your child to sleep in their own bed:**

- Studies show that sharing a bed with others disturbs our sleep
- Sleeping alone is an important step in developing independence
- When your child has you to soothe them they won't develop the self-regulation skills they need to soothe themselves
- If your child is afraid to sleep alone, allowing them to sleep in your bed may reinforce their worry

**This tips sheet covers basic strategies for helping your child to sleep in their own bed. If these tips don't resolve your problem, speak to your GP about a referral to a child clinical psychologist.**

**A clinical psychologist can provide you with additional strategies and help you to resolve any underlying issues contributing to challenging bedtime behaviour.**