

# Positive bedtime routines (3–18 months)

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## How a positive bedtime routine can help your child

A good bedtime routine helps soothe and calm your child so she's ready for sleep. It also helps your child develop good sleep habits now and for the future.

Without a good bedtime routine, it can be hard for a baby or child to settle to sleep.

## What a positive bedtime routine looks like

A bedtime routine can have quite a few activities. The key is that you do similar activities in roughly the same way each night, starting around 20 minutes before your child's bedtime.

Most bedtime routines include pre-bed tasks like having a bath and brushing teeth, as well as quiet, enjoyable activities like reading a book or listening to a story. The aim is to keep the atmosphere calm and positive, using affection and praise.

Here's an example of a bedtime routine that could start after dinner, a bath and cleaning teeth:

- Your child plays quietly for 15-20 minutes – this could include reading with you.
- Your child and you go into the bedroom.
- Your child and you have a brief cuddle and kiss.
- You put your child into bed.

At the end of the routine, say goodnight to your child. This is the time to be firm if your child resists. Be clear that it's now time for sleep, then leave the room straight away.

## Tips for establishing a positive bedtime routine

- **Decide on a regular time for your child to go to bed.** For example, many toddlers are ready for bed at about 8 pm. Putting your child to bed at the same time every night will help them to establish a good sleeping routine.
- **Avoid loud or boisterous play before bedtime.** This can make it harder for your child to use the bedtime routine to get ready for sleep.
- **Make sure your child has the right sleep environment.** Reduce stimulation by making the room darker and quieter. A gentle regular sound like soft music or white noise from a fan can also help your baby or toddler tune out and settle.
- **Be kind and consistent if your child resists sleep.** Calling out and getting out of bed often become problems in the toddler years. Try spending a little more time with your child before lights out, then be firm that it's time for sleep. Always go to your child if she genuinely needs your attention.

- **Help your child understand that night-time is for sleeping.** This means that if you do go back in to settle your child, avoid stimulating her or waking her up more. You can do this by keeping the visit brief, keeping the lights down low and speaking quietly.