

Sleep Training Tips and Guidelines



Have you and your family decided that it's time for sleep training? We're here to help. Below, you will find specific steps for the graduated cry-it-out method. This process was developed by pediatrician Richard Ferber. You can learn more from his book, *How to Solve your Child's Sleep Problems*. Before you start sleep training, speak with your primary care provider or HealthySteps Specialist to make sure it's appropriate for you, your family, and your baby. This process is simple but can be challenging. It's good to have extra support in your corner.

BEFORE YOU START

- Get everyone in your household ready for sleep training, otherwise it won't work. Make sure everyone agrees with the plan. Sleep training may take several nights and be quite loud.
- If you have sensitive neighbors, you may want to warn them that your baby will cry for a few nights. Let them know the noise will be short-lived.
- Remember that it is much easier to sleep train children who still sleep in a crib and cannot get out. Sleep training early will make life easier for you and your child in the future.
- A dark room may help your child sleep at night. A ceiling fan or a white noise app may also help children fall and stay asleep.
- Make sure your child is tired at bedtime. If your child is not sleepy until later, you may need to adjust their naps to an earlier time. After 2 years of age children should not nap after 2 p.m.
- Avoid TV and other screens, especially in the hour before bedtime. Research shows they can disrupt sleep.



GRADUATED CRY-IT-OUT

STEP 1. Create a consistent bedtime and routine. Put your baby to bed at the same time every night. This helps them get to sleep more easily. Create a simple bedtime routine that may include books, songs, feeding, a bath or other activities that are soothing. Dim the lights. Make it clear that bedtime is different than other times.

STEP 2. Put baby in their crib while they are sleepy, but still awake.

Although it may be easier to put your baby down after they are asleep, the point of this process is to help them get there on their own. This happens when they are aware of being placed in the crib. It may also help when they wake up during the night. They will see where they are and remember why they are there—to sleep. Say “goodnight” to your baby and leave the room, even when they begin to cry.

STEP 3. Let baby cry for gradually longer periods. Comfort them periodically without picking them up. Go in and briefly comfort your baby after 5 minutes of crying. Rub their back and quietly remind them that it is time to sleep. Do not pick them up (unless they need a diaper change or fresh pajamas), even if they are standing in the crib and reaching for you. Leave the room again. This time wait 10 minutes. After comforting them the same way, leave the room for 15 minutes, and so on. It may take your baby over an hour the first night to fall asleep. Continue every night for several days. Your baby will begin to fall asleep more quickly and with less crying.

CONSISTENCY IS KEY

Be consistent with these steps and your baby may be falling asleep on their own in less than a week. It may be tempting to stay in the room so baby knows you’re there. This may work for some babies, but for others it will make the process longer. It is recommended you leave the room if you can.

Letting your baby cry themselves to sleep will not impact their brain development if you are loving and responsive during the day. Being able to fall asleep independently is a great skill. And it’s one that will help both you and your child throughout life.

