



Why is bedtime so challenging?

Bedtime should be a calm and relaxing time of day, but often the transition and steps to getting children to bed are far from calm and relaxing. There are many reasons for this:

- Your child is **not tired** and needs to have an appropriate schedule adjustment
- Your child is **overly-tired** and isn't able to think clearly or follow directions
- Your child **doesn't want to go to bed** and is attempting to stall and/ or change your mind
- Your child has **learned that this is, in fact**, the bedtime routine
- You have not **set clear expectations and boundaries** nor stuck to them

Steps To Success:

1. To set up a successful bedtime, you must first establish a reasonable and age-appropriate **routine**:
Decide on your child's set bedtime based on his/ her age, activity level, daytime sleeping, and family routine.
Whatever time you chose, you must stick to it every night, including weekends! Later, when children get to elementary school, you can negotiate weekend bedtimes, however young children don't know what a weekend is, so two days of random bedtimes are quite disruptive
2. **Wind down towards bedtime.** *Often children have a hard time disengaging from a fun activity in order to go to bed. Avoid television or screen time as a winding down activity. Even though it looks like your child is in a calm and restive state – this is an illusion. They are deeply engaged in their viewing and it can be very challenging to disengage them. Additionally, high levels of physical activity right before the bedtime routine can cause challenges for your child.*
3. Create a **Picture Routine** that depicts each step of the bedtime routine. *Display it in a prominent place at your child's level: A **pictorial step-by-step** can help move your child forward. Create it together with your child, if he/ she is old enough to participate. Take posed pictures of your child doing each step and use those in the picture routine. Here's a sample of what a picture routine looks like in a preschool classroom:*



4. **Do the routine** with your child for at least 10 days to consolidate each step:
Practice each step of the routine until success happens along the way. When your child starts negotiating, refusing to cooperate, or skips steps, take him/ her back to the picture routine, to the last successful step. There, point to where you last left off, and redo the steps that were missed or done poorly. If your child still refuses, then 'pause' everything else, and tell your child, "Nothing else can happen tonight until you complete the next step". Be prepared to wait...patiently!
5. **Set aside 5 minutes for last-minute requests** and build it in to the Picture Routine. *Ask your child, "Lights out in 5 minutes. What do you need before I turn out the lights. If your child asks for multiple things, make them chose only one. Example: "I want some water and to hug the dog and read another story" You say, "That's too many things for 5 minutes. Pick one." Then let your child do that thing, and only that one thing.*
6. Once in bed, **be clear with your child about your departure.** *Complete your final bedtime routine activity (kisses, hugs, prayers, tucking in, etc) and then leave!*



Troubleshooting!

- Avoid last minute chats or requests for water, going potty, one more story, or “I have to tell dad something”. This is the purpose of building in one Last-Minute Request. Leave the room, and wait outside for a moment to ensure your child has settled down.
- If he/ she gets out of bed and leaves the room, calmly take their hand and walk them back to their bed, kiss goodnight, and leave again. Avoid picking them up and lots of cuddling. Remember your goal is to get them to stay in bed and fall asleep.
- If they get up again, calmly walk them back (no picking up), tuck them in and leave.
- Repeat until they stay in the bed. Leave the room each time. DON'T GIVE UP! This may happen many, many, many times before your child finally goes to sleep.
- Avoid speaking. This prevents you from engaging in any negotiations, issuing threats, declaring your frustrations, or disrupting the routine in any way. Remember, the bedtime routine has been completed. All you are dealing with right now is the very last piece: getting them into bed and staying there.
- If your child has a temper tantrum, wait it out, and then calmly walk them back to bed. Tantrums are a expression of frustration that your child isn't getting what they want, and meant to distract you from bedtime. Once the tantrum is over, continue where you left off.
- Stay with it until the end. Avoid handing over to another adult mid-process. This will undermine your authority and the new adult will simply end up starting over again. Also, you've just shown your child that you will give up before he/ she does. Parents – take turns each night so that you're both have an opportunity to follow through on the entire routine, and your child learns that there is no “good cop/ bad cop”.

WELL DONE, YOU DID IT!

IF YOU HAVE A QUESTION...

Email us at

info@bloomlearning.com

We're here to help!



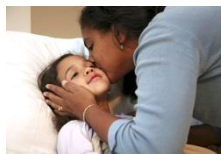
Bedtime Success

The Short Version

- Decide on your child's set bedtime based on his/ her age, activity level, daytime sleeping, and family routine.
- Wind down towards bedtime
- Create a Picture Routine that depicts each step of the bedtime routine
- Do the routine with your child for at least 10 days to consolidate each step:
- Set aside 5 minutes for last-minute requests and build it in to the Picture Routine
- Once in bed, be clear with your child about your departure. Complete your final bedtime routine activity (kisses, hugs, prayers, tucking in, etc) and then leave!

Troubleshooting!

- Avoid last minute chats or requests. Leave the room, and wait outside for a moment to ensure your child has settled down.
- If he/ she gets out of bed and leaves the room, calmly take their hand and walk them back to their bed, kiss goodnight, and leave again. Avoid picking them up and lots of cuddling. Remember your goal is to get them to stay in bed and fall asleep. Repeat until they stay in the bed. Leave the room each time. DON'T GIVE UP! This may happen many, many, many times before your child finally goes to sleep.
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WELL DONE, YOU DID IT!

Using these steps teaches your child the steps to bedtime success. Children often struggle to end things. They fight sleep, and don't want to leave your company. Remember, you are TEACHING your child the routine, and whatever you do is what they will learn. If you are consistent, so will your child be. If you are inconsistent and flexible, then that's how your child will respond.

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