



Sleeping Sound

Primary School Children Bedtime Resistance – Management

Set bedtime.

Pick a suitable bedtime for your child (e.g. 7 o'clock for a 5 year old, 8 o'clock for an 8 year old, 9 o'clock for a 10 year old). Establish a regular bedtime to help set your child's internal body clock. Be sure that your child is ready for sleep before putting them to bed. Explain the new rules to your child so they know what to expect. Make this brief and avoid arguing about the new rules.

Bedtime fading.

Putting children to bed when they are *not* tired increases the chances of bedtime struggles. Therefore, for some children it is best to start by setting the bedtime at the time they usually fall asleep and gradually making the bedtime earlier. For example:

- Work out when your child is naturally falling asleep and set this as the temporary bedtime.
- If you want your child to go to bed at 8:30, but they usually do not fall asleep until 10:30, choose 10:30 as the temporary bedtime. This will make it easier to teach your child how to fall asleep within a short time of getting into bed.
- Once they are falling asleep easily and quickly at this temporary bedtime **then make their bedtime earlier by 15 minutes every few days.**
- Be patient. If you move the bedtime back too quickly, you may have problems with your child not being able to fall asleep.
- Stop moving the bedtime when you have reached the bedtime you want (e.g. 8.30pm).

Bedtime routine.

Establish a consistent bedtime routine for your child. A bedtime routine should include calm and enjoyable activities, such as a bath and bedtime stories. Avoid stimulating high-energy activities, such as playing outside, running around, or watching exciting TV shows or DVDs. Make a chart of the bedtime routine to help keep your child on track.

Ignore complaints or protests.

Ignore your child's complaints or protests about bedtime, such as not being tired. Discussing or arguing about bedtime will lead to a struggle with your child and bedtime problems will continue! Firmly and calmly let your child know it is time for bed and continue with the routine.



Putting your child to bed.

When the bedtime routine is complete, put your child to bed and leave the room. It is important that you leave the room while your child is still **AWAKE**, as this helps your child learn to fall asleep on their own.

What if my child cries or yells?

If your child yells or calls out to you but remains in bed, remind them that it is bedtime or you can ignore them. If they continue to be upset, check on your child. Wait for as long or short a time as you wish. The visits should be *brief* (1 minute) and *boring*. Unless your child is frightened, don't soothe or comfort your child during these visits and don't get into a discussion. Calmly tell your child that it's time to go to sleep. The purpose of returning to the room is to reassure your child that you are still there and to reassure you that your child is ok.

What if my child gets out of bed or out of his room?

If your child gets out of bed or comes out of their room, firmly and calmly return them to bed. For some children, simply returning them to bed multiple times works. For others, letting them know that if they get up again you will close the bedroom door can be effective. If your child gets out of bed, put him back in bed and close the door for a brief period (1 minute to start). After 1 minute, open the door. If your child is in bed, praise them and leave the door open. If they are up, put them back in bed and close the door again but leave it closed for a longer time, increasing the time by a few minutes each time they get up. Don't lock your child in their room. The goal is to teach your child to stay in bed, not to punish or scare them.

Reward positive behaviour.

Sticker charts can help children to follow new sleep routines/rules. Reward your child as soon as they wake up in the morning with a sticker. Don't focus on bad behaviour from the night before, focus on their successes. A certain number of stickers should lead to a reward the child is likely to enjoy (e.g. a lucky dip prize, trip to the park). This will vary depending on the age of the child. This should be easy to achieve for the child to begin with to increase the likelihood of your child being able to succeed.

Be consistent.

Consistency is the most important thing in helping your child to change their behaviour. Occasionally giving in to your child's refusal to go to bed is likely to make it more difficult to change their behaviour in the long-term.

