Baby Sleep Secrets

22 Simple Ways To Get Your Baby To Sleep Through The Night!
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Table of Contents

Introduction .............................................................................................................................................. 5
Why These Secrets Work .......................................................................................................................... 6
How Long Does it Take? .......................................................................................................................... 6
When to Use These Solutions ................................................................................................................ 6
What Age Should Baby Be? ..................................................................................................................... 6
What if Baby Has Bad Habits? ................................................................................................................. 7
Let’s Get Going! ............................................................................................................................................. 7
If You Need Help Now .......................................................................................................................... 8
Secret #1. Keep Movements Gentle ..................................................................................................... 8
Secret #2. Stay Calm ................................................................................................................................ 10
Secret #3. Use White Noise .................................................................................................................. 12
Secret #4. Don’t Change Techniques Too Fast ............................................................................. 13
Secret #5. Give Baby a Massage .......................................................................................................... 13
Solutions in One Day or Less .............................................................................................................. 16
Secret #6. Keep Daytime Busy ............................................................................................................ 16
Secret #7. Create an Inviting Environment .......................................................................................... 18
Secret #8. Keep Baby Awake After Meals ........................................................................................... 21
Secret #9. Discover the Differences ................................................................................................... 23
Secret #10. Make Baby Fall Asleep in the Crib ............................................................................... 25
Secret #11. Turn Off the TV ................................................................................................................... 26
Secret #12. Determine Your Strategy During the Day ......................................................................... 27
Secret #13. Give Baby a Reminder of You ............................................................................................ 28
Secret #14. Take Away the Pacifier .................................................................................................... 30
One Week or Less Solutions ................................................................................................................... 33
Secret #15. Create an Evening Routine ............................................................................................... 33
Secret #16. Mimic the Feeling of the Womb ......................................................................................... 35
Secret #17. Leave Baby Lying Down .................................................................................................... 41
Secret #18. Make Nighttime Boring .................................................................................................... 42
Secret #19. Associate an Item with Nighttime ..................................................................................... 43
Long-Term Solutions ............................................................................................................................ 45
Secret #20. Implement Daily Naps ....................................................................................................... 45
Secret #21. Predict your Baby’s Sleep Cycle ......................................................................................... 46
Secret #22. Confirm Daycare Practices ............................................................................................... 49
Conclusion .............................................................................................................................................. 52
Routine ....................................................................................................................................................... 52
Consistency ................................................................................................................................................. 52
Patience ........................................................................................................................................................ 52
Closing Thoughts ...................................................................................................................................... 53
Introduction

It's late (or way too early). Your baby won't stop crying, and you've tried everything! You need some serious sleep yourself, and it's clear that baby does too.

Here are 22 simple secrets to help your baby sleep through the night. Each one is easy to implement, but they all take commitment and patience. Your baby doesn't have a magic formula – try all these techniques, alone and in combination, to find the solution that works for you.

Be patient to allow these techniques time to work; baby probably won't respond immediately, but changing things up every few minutes will just upset baby more. Don't worry – we talk about all these possibilities in the guide and how to best implement them so you don't have to guess!

This easy-to-use guide breaks sleep secrets down by how soon you need results. There is a section for tips to help you right now, that focuses on getting the crying to stop now so you can get some rest. There are secrets that work in one day, giving you the day to prepare to help baby sleep.

If you are looking for longer-term solutions, look at the one week or less and long-term solution sections, which help create the kind of routine your baby needs for successful sleep.

No matter what, keep a few things in mind:

- Each baby is unique – just as you as parents are unique, so is your baby. Find what works for you, even if it doesn't exactly match what you read.

- Your baby's sleeping is not a reflection of your parenting – because each baby is different, there is no use in comparing your parenting to anyone else's.

- Consistency is key – just as your workouts aren't effective if you only go twice a month, your sleep training won't be effective if you only do it half-heartedly. To see results, you must commit.

- Look at the big picture – has your baby's habits changed recently? Perhaps there's a larger issue at work, such as an undiagnosed illness. Look at the small and big signs to find the root of the problem.
Why These Secrets Work

What does this guide provide that you can’t get anywhere else? First, it’s based on real life, with hands-on suggestions. Research is great, but what does it matter if it doesn’t help you get closer to your goal of sleeping through the night? You need practical solutions, not theory.

Second, it’s simple. The solutions work, and they’re easy to do when you’re tired. And they don’t require you to buy special equipment or study complicated parenting books for hours on end.

How Long Does it Take?

As we’ve already said, each baby is different, so creating a habit of sleeping through the night varies for each family. Short-term solutions, like those in the Need Help Right Now section, work within minutes, but can take much longer – think more like an hour.

For longer-term solutions, or those that require habit-forming, it could take a few days to reset baby’s expectations. Most parents find that solutions like “cry it out” take a couple of days to work, while some can take up to a week.

When to Use These Solutions

Use these solutions whenever you need help. There are some tips that can be put into place in a matter of minutes, to give you instant relief. If you expect results right now, don’t use the long-term secrets. Those are best implemented once you have a chance to plan ahead.

Why? These long-term secrets are only effective if you are consistent at applying them. If you start before you have a chance to plan, you might not be able to stick with it. This is detrimental to you and your baby because it starts to create a habit that you don’t follow through on.

What Age Should Baby Be?

The right time to create good habits with baby is when you bring her home from the hospital. It’s essential to build a routine from day 1 so that everyone can stay disciplined and healthy. Because baby is brand new, she doesn’t know what life outside the womb is like yet. You have the chance to teach her from the very beginning what you want her to do – fall asleep easily, and get back to sleep on her own if she wakes up in the night.

If you’ve waited a few days, weeks, or months to teach baby good habits, don’t despair! It’s ok. It’s never too late to start, though the longer you wait to begin the longer it will take to build good habits with baby. These secrets work for babies of any age, so don’t worry if your baby isn’t a newborn.
What if Baby Has Bad Habits?

What do you do if baby already has bad habits? You can always break them. Be disciplined; baby needs to know that you’re not just trying something new, but that the routine has changed.

Baby will probably be resistant at first. Stick with it, or baby will learn that crying and fussing will get her what she wants, and you have just prolonged your sleepless nights. Even if you don’t see results in the first few days, stick with it. If baby is used to her own way of sleeping, it will take her several days to adjust.

Keep this in mind: adults usually take 21 days to form a habit. Babies thankfully need less time than that, but a habit isn’t created instantaneously. They aren’t broken instantaneously either! So above all, know that it might take some time and that this is normal.

Let’s Get Going!

When you’re ready to try something new, something that won’t take a lot of preparation, turn the page. Let’s get started! It’s time for everyone to get a good night’s rest.
If You Need Help Now

First, don’t despair! There are several easy solutions to help your baby get to sleep. Listed below are easy-to-use, “put in practice right now” ideas. These are for use anytime, as they create the right kind of environment for baby to fall asleep.

However, these solutions are not meant to be a long-term fix. These tips and suggestions help the immediate problem so you can get some rest, but they aren’t going to change baby’s habits forever.

Use these solutions when you need a quick-fix, but don’t neglect the other sections of this guide, which help you and baby develop healthy sleep habits and a routine that works for your family.

Finally, use this section as the building blocks for your implementation of sleep habits. Turn these into habits by doing them daily, as you add on additional solutions from the longer-term sections until you find the optimal combination for your baby.

Good luck, and let’s get started!

Secret #1. Keep Movements Gentle

When you’re around your baby and trying to help him fall asleep, keep your movements gentle. Fast or startling movements will only serve to wake baby up even more.

Your goal right now is to lull baby to sleep by creating an environment that encourages relaxation and rest.

The key to telling baby it’s time to sleep is to slow everything down. Try these key ways to indicate to baby that it’s time to wind down:

Walk Slowly

Keep your physical movements slow and steady. Don’t rush to baby, and don’t make any sudden actions. If you are already holding baby, don’t bounce rapidly. Instead, try a gentle swinging motion combined with talking in a gentle, calming voice.

To keep yourself from speeding up, repeat a slow song in your head or count methodically. This helps your brain slow down and not get too stressed from the situation.
Talk Softly

Help baby understand that it’s time to sleep by speaking softly and slowly. Avoid varying your tone a lot with the baby, as this will cause him to perk up. Instead, sing quietly or just talk, allowing your voice to turn into quiet white noise for baby.

Taper your conversation into a whisper for a few minutes, and eventually let it stop. Baby needs to learn to fall asleep without your voice, or you will become locked in a cycle of needing to be awake every time baby needs to fall asleep.

Keep Facial Expressions Neutral

Your baby is trained by nature to recognize your face, and she can recognize your feelings too. Your emotions trigger her emotions, so keep your face neutral. Avoid expressions like these:

1. Smiling widely
2. Frowning
3. Getting angry
4. Sadness
5. Widening or narrowing of the eyes

When you are looking at baby, focus on relaxing your face muscles, which will help her relax. Keep your eyes soft and your mouth neutral, as it would be in sleep.

Finally, avoid changing your facial expressions rapidly, such as raising your eyebrows quickly or breaking into a smile. Baby will pay attention to your face and watch the changing expressions rather than drifting off to sleep.

Relax Your Body

If you’re holding baby, keep your arms relaxed. Fold him into your body to increase his feeling of being protected, and let your own stress go. If you hold tension in your neck, back, or arms, baby will feel it and will have a harder time relaxing himself.

Action Items:

- Clench and relax your muscle groups individually, to help you let go of physical stress that baby can understand
- Consciously keep your face neutral
- Count in your head or choose another method for keeping your movements slow and methodical
Secret #2. Stay Calm

Trying without success to get your baby to sleep can be extremely stressful. However, you getting stressed only hurts your baby and keeps him awake. This makes you more stressed, and the cycle continues.

How does your stress affect the baby? It's well documented that stress during pregnancy can be passed on to your baby. Once your baby is out of the womb, stress is still easily passed between parent and child, because baby can sense how you are feeling.

Unknowingly, you express stress in the following ways:

- Facial expressions
- Muscle tension
- Posture
- Breathing rhythm

Because baby picks up on stress at all these levels, you must work to control and decrease your stress instead of just hide it.

Here's how you break the cycle. Learn to manage and control the stress using these methods:

1. **Take deep breaths.** Focus on breathing deeply, in through your nose, out through your mouth. Try to mimic the rhythm of breathing while sleeping, especially if you are holding your baby. Baby can feel the rise and fall of your chest, and will automatically adjust her breathing to match your own.

2. **Repeat a silent saying.** Create a mantra for yourself. A mantra is a short, simple saying that helps focus your mind and relax your body. It could be something as simple as “Stay calm, stay strong” or “I choose to be relaxed.”

   Try different sayings until you find something that really has meaning for you. Repeat it slowly in your mind to help you center yourself and insulate you from stress.

3. **Visualize a relaxing place.** Take yourself out of the current situation by visualizing a location that makes you feel relaxed. Many people think of lying on a beach, for example.

   Picture your location in exact detail; focus on what makes it “real” for you, such as the sounds, the smells, or the feeling of weather.
4. **Remember you’re not alone.** You are one of billions of parents who face a crying baby each day. The fact that baby won’t sleep isn’t a reflection on you as a parent and doesn’t mean that you are bad at parenting.

   It probably doesn't mean that there is something wrong with baby, although if there has been a sudden change in behavior, visit your doctor as soon as possible.

   What it means is that baby hasn’t adjusted to life outside the womb yet. Baby doesn’t know how much sleep she needs and when she needs it. That lack of understanding is what causes nights like these. Remember, you’re not alone!

5. **Take a break.** It’s ok to step out of the room for a minute and collect your thoughts. If you stay in the same tense environment, it will be hard to change your mood, thus making it hard for baby to relax as well. Take a few minutes to yourself. Stretch your tired muscles, breathe deeply, and think logically. Then go back in and pass your newfound relaxation on to baby.

   The final step to staying calm is to know when you need to trade off with someone. It can be a dangerous situation to be desperate for sleep with a baby that won’t calm down.

   If you find that you can’t bring your stress level under control, try to find someone who can switch off with you so you can leave the situation for a while.

   Here’s how you know if it’s time to take a break:

   - You can’t think logically or clearly
   - You’re uncontrollably emotional: laughing, crying, etc.
   - You get angry at baby or consider violence
   - The situation is causing you to shut down and feel hopeless

   If there’s no one around who can give you a few minutes of rest, don’t despair. Engage in the stress management techniques listed here and keep going through this list of strategies. Combine them or try them alone until you find the solution for you.

   Remember that above all, your baby responds to your emotions; put yourself in a mental place where you feel relaxed and safe. Baby will sense this and adjust accordingly.

   **Action Items:**

   - Create your mantra – pick a short saying you can repeat to yourself to help stay calm
• Focus on your breathing – try for 3 seconds inhaling, 5 seconds exhaling

• Mentally separate yourself – remember that babies cry, and that it's not a reflection of your skills as a parent

Secret #3. Use White Noise

In the womb, everything seems like white noise to a baby. They become comfortable with this, and it creates a sense of safety and reassurance. Try to recreate this using white noise to help baby sleep.

Turn on classical music softly or play a CD with recordings of actual white noise, such as a hair dryer, vacuum cleaner, raindrops, or static. If you have a laptop, look for music sharing programs where you can pay a small fee and stream music all night. Most of these services will have a wide enough breadth of music to have something suitable.

When choosing the music, go for sounds that are repetitive or unchanging. Think about the sound of a fan blowing – the sound is consistent, unimportant, and it doesn’t catch your attention. It does, however, lull you into a sense of comfort and can help you drift off to sleep. Keep this in mind when choosing sounds for your baby.

If you do not have access to music, your own voice can become white noise for baby. Choose a lullaby to sing softly and take care to keep your voice monotone. If you don’t care to sing, talk to baby. It doesn’t matter what you talk about – the point is just to create unremarkable noise that helps calm baby down.

How do you know when it’s working? When baby begins to breathe or move in time with the sound, or begins to generally settle down, you know white noise is working. This could take several minutes, so be patient and let the noise do its trick.

Once baby has relaxed, put him down (if you are currently holding him) or slowly and quietly leave his sleep area. Here’s the key: do whatever you can to not interrupt the white noise, at least while baby is falling asleep.

Action Items:

• Find a CD with classical music white noise recordings

• Consider buying a subscription to an online music sharing program, which provides instant access to thousands of options

• Brainstorm lullabies you can sing if electronics are not available or don’t seem to be working
Secret #4. Don’t Change Techniques Too Fast

This is the easiest suggestion so far to follow in terms of effort. It's simple, but requires patience. One mistake many parents make is to try every technique possible to get their baby to sleep.

While it's good to try techniques in combination or switch things up to find what works for you, you must give these secrets a chance to work. There is no hard-and-fast amount of time allotted for each solution, so use your judgment.

If you see a slight improvement based on one of the techniques, stick with it. Give baby a chance to get comfortable before you decide the technique doesn’t work.

It is so important not to change things up too quickly because the more changes you expose the baby to, the more awake they will be. Everyone responds to stimuli, and babies are no different.

If you put something new in front of them to hear or see or touch, they will be tempted to pay attention to it instead of ignoring it and falling asleep.

Action Items:

- Create a calendar where you record when you first try a technique. For right now, turn on a timer or stopwatch so you aren't tempted to give up after only a few minutes
- Think through which techniques you want to try so that when you’re frustrated and need to switch to something new, you will know what is next on the list

Secret #5. Give Baby a Massage

Baby massage is good for a number of things. Babies experience stress just as adults do, and a massage can help baby relax. It can help premature babies stimulate growth and promotes good digestion.

Massage is a good way for new parents to build a bond with baby, and it encourages good relationships with other family members, including brothers and sisters or other caregivers. It also helps parents relax and find some quiet time for just them and baby, which can be rare.

For babies, it offers these benefits:

- Improves circulation
- Eases digestion
- Promotes healthy growth and development
• Strengthens the bond between the massager and baby
• Promotes a sense of self and awareness of the body
• Relaxes and calms baby
• Provides relief for congestion and other light health conditions

When Should You Massage?

The right time to massage baby is when you are relaxed and when you have enough time to devote to baby without interruption. Don't massage baby when he is full, as this can cause discomfort.

What You Need

• A towel
• Massage oils or a vegetable-based oil
• Soft music

How to Massage Baby

1. Lay baby face-up on the towel. Begin at the head, using all your fingers to push down and up on baby's head, much like a gentle comb would work through your own hair. Switch this up by making circles with your fingers or varying pressure. Don’t use oil on baby’s head or face.

2. Rub your thumbs from the middle of baby's forehead to the temples gently. Continue your thumbs down the sides of baby’s face to his jaw, meeting together at his chin. Massage his face, following his cheekbones out to the edges of his face.

3. Stroke baby’s chest, using your whole hands and working from the center up and out towards the shoulders. The purpose is to spread out coiled muscles, so think long, slow strokes instead of a shorter, more pinching strategy.

4. Move to baby’s arms, holding his hand in one of yours, and stroking up and down with two or three fingers of the free hand. You can also roll baby’s arms between your palms to give a different sensation. Be sure not to pull or squeeze baby.

5. After the arms, focus on baby’s hands. Use your thumb to massage baby’s palm and the space between the thumb and forefinger. Roll each finger in yours, and focus on spreading out the hand.

6. When you get to baby’s stomach, be very gentle. Use this time to help gently massage baby’s organs, promoting digestion and blood flow. Massage from baby’s right side to his left side, again using long, smooth
strokes. Keep this pressure constant, replacing one hand with the other for a continuous movement.

7. Next, move to the legs, repeating the stroking and rolling motions explained in step 4 for his arms.

8. Massage the tops and bottoms of baby’s feet, using your thumbs on baby’s arches. Roll each toe between your fingers.

9. Gently turn baby on his stomach, caring for his head. Stroke sideways from the middle of baby’s back, creating space between his shoulder blades. Then, use long vertical strokes to go from baby’s shoulders down to his toes. Don’t forget baby’s buttocks, as there are a lot of muscles there as well!

10. Finish with a cuddle and a kiss

**How Often to Massage**

Baby massage is safe to do everyday, and it can be a great part of a pre-bed routine. Be sure to pay attention to baby’s reaction to massage, as it can overstimulate him if you do it for too long.

For new babies, just a few minutes is enough. For older babies, they may enjoy up to 10 or 15 minutes.

**Action Items:**

- Determine when the best time of day to massage baby is
- Practice massage using a doll or toy so that when you have baby, you aren’t hesitant or afraid
- Encourage the involvement of your other primary caregiver or family members
Solutions in One Day or Less

The sleep solutions in this section are designed to be implemented the same day you need baby to get to sleep. However, they aren’t solutions for the immediate-term; these are meant to be put in place before you need baby to sleep.

In general, these work best if you prepare during the day with these tips to get baby to sleep at night.

If you don’t have a full day between when you read this and when you need help, don’t worry. These tips can be effective even with just a few hours to prepare.

Just focus on the point of each solution – if you don’t have the materials available to you, make do with what you can find.

Even if you aren’t able to fully implement these solutions, do what you can. For instance, if you already have a busy schedule that doesn’t leave a lot of time today to keep baby awake for an hour after a meal, do what you can.

Fifteen minutes is better than nothing. It’s a process, so do what you can and keep working at it!

Secret #6. Keep Daytime Busy

Most babies have a hard time understanding the difference between day and night for the first few months of life. They are accustomed to being lulled to sleep in the womb by mom’s movements.

They then wake up at night when mom goes to sleep. When they are born, they don’t automatically know that their cycle is supposed to be the other way around.

Even with infants and toddlers, it can be difficult to teach a healthy sleep cycle. With naps during the day and all the stimuli that surround evening family time, babies don’t just understand that when it’s dark it’s time to sleep.

There’s a simple secret to helping babies learn the difference and sleep better at night. Keep daytime as busy and stimulating as possible. One of the great things about night is that you can make it boring so babies want to fall asleep; you can make daytime the opposite.

There are lots of simple actions you can take to increase your interactions with baby during the day to keep them engaged and busy:

- **Keep things well lit** – if you associate light with day and dark with night, your baby will learn more quickly that light means they should be awake
• **Talk constantly** – though baby can’t respond when you speak to her, she is absorbing your language like a sponge so that she can soon start speaking back to you. Keep her engaged by talking. The subject doesn’t matter, but this is a great chance to start her on a lifetime of learning and exploration.

• **Avoid downtime** – keep baby active throughout the day and avoid long periods of relaxation, unless it is nap time.

One quick note: If possible, use natural light to help stimulate baby. Artificial light through overhead lights or lamps, does not give the same effect as a bright, open window. Whenever appropriate, opt for natural sunlight.

With just a little planning, you can easily go through an entire day with baby without letting up. Try these easy activities to help teach baby that daytime is for being awake, alert, and engaged:

• **Talk as you go through daily tasks** – explain to baby what you are doing and why. Hold up new objects and state their name. Give them to baby, if safe, so she can engage multiple senses.

• **Never let more than 15 minutes go by without interaction** – if you stick to a simple rule, you can keep baby awake and learning for more time throughout the day.

• **Be physical** – take baby with you as you walk from store to store, when you exercise, and as you run errands. The stimuli and changing scenery will let baby know that daytime is busy time.

What’s the point of keeping baby awake during the day? To help tire him out before bedtime! There is a fine line to walk that we will discuss later about not letting babies get too sleepy before putting them down.

However, all you have to do is pay attention to avoid problems. More on this later!

Another important reason to keep baby awake and stimulated by lots of things during the day is to draw a difference in baby’s mind between exciting day and boring night.

If baby comes to associate light with day and day with activity, he will naturally adjust to want to be awake during the day.

Remember, no matter how scary it may seem, engaging your baby throughout the day is beneficial in many ways – it helps you bond as a family, encourages learning and language development, and enforces social conventions like sleeping at night.
Don't be stressed or self-conscious about what you say; baby doesn’t know or care. He just cares that you’re taking the time to be with him.

**Action Items:**

- Brainstorm activities for you and baby for the week; this doesn’t have to be hard – just think about the activities you already have to do and plan how you can engage with baby

- Test to see if the areas where baby spends his day are well lit. If not, consider increasing light by opening window coverings or plugging in lamps.

**Secret #7. Create an Inviting Environment**

For nine months, baby’s environment was the womb. That was the first thing baby knew about life, and the place she feels most comfortable. It’s now time to wean baby off that feeling and get her comfortable to a new sleeping location, but that transition can be confusing for her.

Here are the key elements to making baby's sleeping area inviting and encouraging:

- **Lighting**
- **Location**
- **Temperature**
- **Ambient noise**

**Lighting**

At night, baby’s room should be dark to help teach her that nighttime is dark, and that dark means sleep. Check to see if light seeps in from the window, even after the window coverings are closed.

Some light is often preferred, so consider plugging in a nightlight or dimming a lamp and leaving it on for baby. Allowing a little bit of light to enter the room will reassure baby that she’s not alone and that there’s no reason to be scared.

Though it might seem confusing to say that you should block all light and then turn on a nightlight, the key here is to control the light that enters the room.

Harsh street lamps and headlights from cars are jarring and don’t promote sleep. Nightlights cast a warm glow over the room but aren’t distracting.

By ensuring that window coverings fully block light, you can also control how long baby sleeps. If light seeps in as the sun rises, baby is more likely to be
roused from sleep, possibly before you’d like her to. Control this element so that baby can sleep as long as you prefer.

When you’re ready for her to wake up, slowly allow light to flood the room by opening the coverings. Then, go to wake her yourself so that she can start to associate waking up with daylight.

*Action Items:*

- Do a quick check of the window coverings in baby’s sleep area. Do they effectively block light, even in the daytime? If not, consider changing them out. For immediate effect, drape a blanket or towel over the window covering to increase the light-blocking power.

- Do you have a nightlight or small lamp with a 40-watt bulb that can be placed in baby’s sleep area? If you have 60-watt or higher light bulbs, consider covering the lamp with a colored shade to help mute the light.

*Location*

Baby’s sleeping location is extremely important to helping him fall asleep and stay asleep. There are many differing beliefs on the correct place for baby to sleep, and the point of this guide is not to give you a recommendation.

Instead, it will focus on what you can do to ensure that the location is secure and not distracting for baby.

The most important thing to evaluate when it comes to location is location itself. Presumably you chose baby’s sleeping area after some thought, but it never hurts to reevaluate now that you’ve got baby home and understand his patterns.

A baby’s sleep location should have the following characteristics:

- Easily accessible – you need to be able to reach baby quickly at any time
- Insulated from the activities of the house – baby shouldn’t know that there is a party going on in the living room while he’s trying to sleep
- Consistent – wherever you choose, it should be where baby always sleeps. Naps and nighttime are successful when baby feels safe, and baby feels safest with a routine and expected behavior
- Sleep-inducing – it must be possible to make the area dark, quiet and free of distractions to encourage sleep

Once you have determined the ideal location for baby, look at distractions in the room. Is there a lot to look at in baby’s sleep area? Do things change, do people pass through the room or by the door? Baby’s sleep area should be easily accessible but tucked away, so he can sleep in peace.
You want the location to feel relaxed and comfortable. It should also feel a little boring, so there’s nothing to do but sleep. Minimize distractions for baby using these secrets:

- Make sure nothing is moving or fluttering, such as papers being ruffled by a fan
- Take down or cover anything with changing lights, such as electronics that blink or shiny objects that could reflect light
- Muffle hall traffic noises by moving baby’s sleep area away from a door or placing a rug or carpet to dampen footsteps

**Action Items:**

- Brainstorm the best location in the house for baby to sleep
- Evaluate how quickly you can set up that location for baby
- Distraction-proof the room
- Test the ability to hear movement and activities from the room
- Take steps to muffle the noise, by laying sound-absorbing rugs or remembering to close doors to other rooms to block sound from the sleeping area

**Temperature**

Some research shows that sleeping in lower temperatures promotes healthy sleep patterns and makes the sleep more restful.

If you choose to make baby’s sleep area cooler than perhaps the rest of the house, consider dressing baby in warmer sleep attire to offset the difference.

Many people choose to keep temperatures neutral in the sleeping area, at between 65 and 75 degrees Fahrenheit. If you aren’t able to control the temperature of baby’s room electronically, consider using a fan or portable heater.

Also remember the effect of the sun on a room’s temperature. If you are looking to cool things down, cover the windows during the day with a dark shade that blocks light. This will keep the room from heating up as the outside temperature rises.

**Action Items:**
• Decide if you want the room temperature neutral or cool
• Take steps to prepare the room, either through an electronic system or through environmental changes

Ambient Noise

In the first section of this guide, we talked about the need for white noise or music to help baby sleep. This section focuses on the other sounds that could be helping or hurting baby’s sleep.

• Outside noise – are there noisy cars, construction sounds, dogs barking, or other harsh noises that could keep baby awake?

• Conversations or TV – can baby hear the TV or the family talking in a nearby room?

• Consistent, unremarkable noise – is there a sound that baby hears repeatedly in her room that could help lull her to sleep?

If you live in a particularly noisy location, consider sound-dampening techniques like laying a rug or carpet down. Heavy window coverings also help to block sound, as does keeping the windows shut.

If these things aren’t possible, work to place baby in the most insulated area of the house.

Action Items:

• Evaluate your living situation to see if there are noise producers you can mitigate

• Look for the quietest place in the house to serve as baby’s room

Secret #8. Keep Baby Awake After Meals

As any Thanksgiving will show, people generally get sleepy after eating. This happens because your blood sugar levels change and because your body pushes blood to your stomach, thus taking it away from your brain. Babies are no different.

However, letting babies fall asleep after eating creates a bad habit – it unconsciously forms a routine of only being able to fall asleep after eating. In the beginning this might not be an issue, but think about a few months from now. Do you want to have to feed baby every time she wakes up?

So what do you do instead? The secret to resetting baby’s clock and keeping her from needing you to fall back asleep is to keep her active after meals.
Keep activity gentle, as you don’t want to cause her any discomfort, but be active. Here are some great example activities to get you started:

- Play with building blocks or other simple educational toys
- Dance together, with parent holding baby and some upbeat music in the background
- Read a story together
- Do tactile games, where you are touching baby or helping her touch something

Avoid activities like these:

- Putting baby in a stroller and taking her around with you
- Watching TV together
- Putting baby in a crib or playpen to entertain herself

Use these activities to reverse a baby’s order from Eat, Sleep, Play to Eat, Play, Sleep. Doing so helps make baby independent from you and empowers her to fall asleep again on her own when she wakes in the middle of the night.

Why should you avoid the activities listed above? These aren’t really activities at all; they aren’t physical with baby, and may allow her to fall asleep even if you don’t want her to. Stick to activities that require baby to engage. The more senses you can incorporate, the better.

What if baby is already used to eating before sleep? Breaking the cycle is a process, not a one-day solution, so be patient. We will talk about this later in the guide, but a good way to transition baby from the routine of falling asleep while feeding or just after feeding is to ensure that she is awake in her crib. If she falls asleep, lay her down, then wake her up. Don’t get her fully awake, but make sure she is awake, so that she can feel the sensation of falling asleep again on her own, already lying down.

The purpose of this is so that she knows she can fall asleep without you. Again, more on this later.

*Action Items:*

- Brainstorm activities for post-feeding times
- Plan your day so that there is time for activity after eating
• If baby is already accustomed to sleeping after eating, set a schedule for yourself to wean her away from it within 2 weeks.

• Be strong and stick to the schedule!

**Secret #9. Discover the Differences**

Your baby does sleep at some point each day, right? The problem isn’t that baby doesn’t sleep, it’s that baby sleeps when it’s not convenient for you, or that baby is very difficult to put asleep for long stretches of time.

Let’s think for a moment about the times that baby does fall asleep. What is it about those times that are conducive to sleep? What helps baby fall asleep in those instances that is lacking or different from evenings?

I focus on evenings here because for the majority of parents, it’s nighttime that they fight with, not naps. However, you can adjust this secret to fit whatever time of day you are having trouble getting baby to sleep through.

Here are some of the factors that affect a baby’s sleep schedule:

• **Level of hunger** – does baby generally fall asleep shortly after eating? After playing? How do periods of sleeping and eating arrange themselves for your baby?

• **Time between sleep** – how long does baby generally go between sleep cycles? Is there a regular schedule, or does baby vary significantly in how long he can be awake before needing sleep?

• **Sleep location** – does baby nap and sleep for the night in the same place? Does baby often fall asleep in public places or in the car?

• **Sleep conditions** – consider how the conditions of baby’s sleep differ. Is it light sometimes and dark others? Is the temperature the same? Is there more activity during some sleep cycles than others?

• **Amount of activity** – how much activity does baby generally have before sleep? Does he sleep shortly after a period of activity or does he sleep best when there is time to wind down?

• **People around** – does baby sleep well when one person puts them down but not another? Do there need to be multiple people for baby to sleep well? Or is he calmest when there is no one to distract and wake him?
• **Clothing** – does baby nap in the clothes he wears during the day? Does he sleep in the same pajamas frequently?

• **Rhythms, sounds, and noises** – what lulls baby to sleep? Is it the hum of the car, the sound of a fan, or the absence of traffic noise?

These are just the basic factors surrounding a baby’s sleep; there are others that may affect you. Look for every possible difference between when baby does sleep and when he doesn’t.

What’s the point of knowing these differences? Knowledge is power! We’re looking for the differences so that we can mimic the times that baby does fall asleep successfully.

Chances are, there is something that helps baby sleep that can be replicated at nighttime. It could be something as simple as putting baby in more comfortable clothes at night or keeping the house quieter.

Remember to be thinking in terms of healthy habits. If baby currently falls asleep best after eating, look to change that one habit while leaving the others intact.

As mentioned earlier, you want to teach baby to fall asleep without needing to eat, so that you don’t have to be awake when baby wakes in the middle of the night.

Now that you know the differences, what’s the secret to recreating them at night? Here’s your step-by-step guide to implementing a few simple changes:

1. Create your “scene” for when baby falls asleep best. Think of “who,” “what,” “where,” “when,” “why,” and “how” to create a complete picture of when baby sleeps best.

2. Create a “scene” for nighttime. Use the same questions to identify what baby’s evening conditions are.

3. Note how long it takes baby to fall asleep in each of these instances

4. Compare notes; identify key differences between the ideal and the actual

5. Choose the most important difference and brainstorm how you can make nighttime conditions mimic those of the ideal sleep time.

6. Make small, meaningful changes to baby’s situation using your brainstormed list. Focus on how you can make something work right now; just because you don’t have the supplies you need or the time to create a new routine doesn’t mean you can’t start now.

7. Pick one additional difference and repeat steps 5 and 6.
One of the important things to remember here is that no solution is going to be perfect. Don’t wait until you have the supplies to hang a better window covering in baby’s room or until you can change your home business hours to better accommodate baby’s needs. Make real changes now.

Every little bit counts, so do what you can to make the situation better today. Temporary solutions are better than no solutions. Besides, baby doesn’t know if the décor doesn’t match or if you have merely moved the location of your conference call instead of installing a door on the home office.

He just knows he’s sleeping better, which means you are too!

Action Items:

- List out all the times baby has slept for the past 3 days
- Follow steps 1-7 listed above for the time you would consider ideal sleep during that 3-day period
- Implement no more than two changes right now. See how they work tonight, and make additional modifications in the next few days if you feel them necessary

Secret #10. Make Baby Fall Asleep in the Crib

Chances are, baby sometimes falls asleep in your arms, in his carseat, or in other places that aren’t his bed. It might seem like a blessing, but it is important not to let baby get used to falling asleep in other places.

Avoiding a Bad Habit

The key term here is “falling asleep” in your arms. Baby doesn’t always have a problem staying asleep, but the process of actually falling asleep can be difficult. That’s why baby needs to learn to fall asleep in his bed, so that he can drift off again by himself in the event that he wakes up in the middle of the night.

If you continually let baby fall asleep while feeding or in your arms, he’ll become comfortable with this process and it will become difficult to fall asleep without the routine. This isn’t a problem during the day, but it poses a big hassle at 3 in the morning when you don’t want to get out of bed.

Remember, getting baby to fall asleep without your help is all about creating good habits and routines.

When baby wakes up in the night, you don’t want to need to go to him to help him fall back asleep. To teach him that it is ok to be by himself when he falls asleep, wake him up a little bit before you place him the crib.
Don’t panic. You heard that right. Wake baby up a little bit, even if he’s sleeping peacefully. It’s essential that baby knows what it feels like to fall asleep while laying down on his own.

**Waking Baby Successfully**

How do you wake him enough to teach without waking him all the way up? Try these methods to gently rouse baby:

- Rub his back
- Talk softly
- Pat his back
- Turn on gentle lights

Keep in mind that baby needs to understand that it’s not playtime. You want to wake baby somewhat, but not completely. Get his eyes open, but keep him calm and settled. Gently place him in his crib or sleeping place so that he is already laying down when he drifts off again.

After laying him down, leave the area before he falls asleep. Though it may seem insensitive or unjust to leave baby while he’s awake, he needs to experience falling asleep without you. Stay nearby, in case you need to go to him, but keep out of sight.

*Action Items:*

1. Wake baby partially by rubbing or patting his back, or otherwise rousing baby through light and sound
2. Lay baby down in his normal sleeping area while awake
3. Leave baby’s line of sight so that baby is alone when he falls asleep

**Secret #11. Turn Off the TV**

Many family routines include watching television during or after dinner, and in some households it is on until baby goes to sleep. This is fine for you, but it’s not such a good idea for baby.

With the advent of educational television for babies, it’s easy to think that watching television is a good way for baby to spend time, but it’s not as good as spending time with you.

Baby needs to build a relationship with you, and the best way to do this is by engaging with each other through play, reading stories, cuddling, and talking.

Secondly, the colors, sounds, and changing images on the screen tell baby’s brain to stay awake. Television is stimulating, and it tells the brain that something is
going on. Therefore, if you expose baby to television right up until you want her to go to sleep, she will be unable to wind down immediately.

For proper sleep habits, baby should be away from the television for the last hour of the day. What should you do instead of watch TV?

- Talk with baby about your day
- Give baby a bath
- Put baby in a swing (if she’s old enough)
- Carry baby as you go throughout your evening activities

By giving baby enough time to settle down after watching television, you’ll help her fall asleep more easily by training her that when the TV goes off, it’s almost time to sleep.

These are great solutions for you too! Adults are also known to fall asleep less quickly if they watch TV right before bed. Make a healthy choice and turn off the screen an hour before baby needs to sleep. Then leave it off to help yourself drift off soon after.

**Action Items:**

- Set a timer or alarm for an hour before you want baby to go to bed
- Turn off the TV or take baby out of the room when the timer goes off
- Plan what evening activity you can do with baby for about an hour before she goes to sleep
- Monitor her progress to see if she falls asleep quicker due to this change

**Secret #12. Determine Your Strategy During the Day**

In the middle of the night, when you’re sleep-deprived and desperate, you’re not going to make your best decisions. Therefore, it’s important that you decide, with any other primary caregivers, your strategy for that night before you ever lay baby down to sleep.

Let’s assume that you have someone to help share the burden of caring for baby. At some point during the day when you are both free and able to focus uninterrupted for a few minutes, review the secrets in this guide and decide which ones you will use that night.

Write down your decisions somewhere that will help you remember, such as a kitchen corkboard or a piece of paper taped to baby’s door.

Perhaps the most important tip for this particular strategy is to stick with your decisions. You made them when you had enough time to evaluate and plan. You were clear-headed and intelligent about your decisions. Don’t second-guess yourself or try to change the plan in the middle of the night.
Doing so interrupts your efforts to build good habits with baby and will prevent her from creating a routine. Stand fast in your plan and you will see results!

**What should your plan include?**

*Sequential List of Strategies* - Plan for which solution you will use first, and if you need more than one, what you will use second and even third. Make a long list so that you don’t have to guess when you’re tired and stressed out.

*Time Limits* – Set a time limit for how long you will try a strategy before you move on to another option. The time limit will depend on the solution you choose, but you should have a maximum and minimum time determined for each option.

*Who is Responsible* – Decide who will respond to baby throughout the evening. It could be that the caregivers switch off, with one going to care for baby every other time there is a need.

Or it could switch off entire days, with one caregiver being responsible for one night and the other being responsible the next night. Thirdly, caregivers could switch off duties, such as one taking feedings and one taking general fussiness.

**Action Items:**

- Schedule a time to discuss your evening strategy with your other primary caregiver
- Determine a set of solutions for that same evening
- Decide how long each solution will be tried
- Decide who is responsible for caring for baby throughout the evening
- Stick to the plan throughout the night

**Secret #13. Give Baby a Reminder of You**

If you find that baby likes to have you near when he falls asleep, consider this: baby is extremely in tune with your scent. Baby knows his mother from before birth and is programmed to love and trust this person.

He meets other important figures just after birth and comes to love and trust them as well by being close to them.

There’s an easy replacement you can offer baby so that you don’t always have to be in the room with him when he wakes up or needs comforting. Give baby an item that reminds him of you, preferably one that smells like you.
**What are some options?**

There are tons of household items you already have that you can use to give baby a relic of you. Think of things you use frequently, or things that baby comes in contact with often. Think of the scents you mix – shampoo, perfume/cologne, aftershave, styling products, etc and see if there is something baby would recognize.

Be willing to try different scents every few days until you find something that calms him. Baby might not respond to a scent that you think is obvious to you, but it’s possible that he identifies with something else.

If you aren’t able to give him something that smells like you, go for an item he sees frequently when he is safe, happy, and comfortable.

Try these examples:

- **Burp rag** – if you lay the rag over your shoulder or near your hair when burping baby, it will naturally pick up your scent. You can lay this in the crib or sleep area with baby to help him relax and feel safe.

- **Spray perfume/cologne on something** – if you are a perfume/cologne wearer with regularity, this scent will become associated with you in baby’s mind. Help him feel your presence by spraying a small item with the scent. Try a baby blanket, a handkerchief, or even a shirt.

- **Pillowcase** – you may not know it, but things you sleep in carry your scent tremendously. Pajamas or a pillowcase are excellent reminders of you. The scent will hold for several days, so whenever you change your sheets, keep aside your pillowcase for baby. When you change your sheets again, switch out the pillowcase.

**How does a reminder help?**

As we’ve mentioned before, feeling safe and protected is an important part of helping baby relax and drift off into sleep. Baby has already associated you with safety and happiness – you are the one who feeds him, cares for him, and loves him.

Because baby trusts and loves you, he associates good things with you. You can use this to your advantage by extending this feeling of safety long into the night. When baby wakes in the middle of the night, he might feel scared or alone. With your scent next to him, he realizes that he’s safe and that everything is ok.

Rather than crying for help, then, he can go back to sleep with no or less involvement from you. It’s a win-win for everyone!
Important notes

Not all babies are ready for this solution. If your baby is very young, you don’t want to put anything in the sleeping area that could harm him. If he could eat the item accidentally or suffocate on the cloth, you need to wait and find another solution.

This solution works well with older children, but not well with infants. In the first few months, you want to avoid putting anything in the crib with baby, as it is too easy for baby to suffocate when his face is pressed into soft cloth.

Action Items:

- Determine if baby is old enough to have something in the sleeping area with him. Don’t give baby anything he could swallow, suffocate on, or get tied up in.

- Decide what item will best remind baby of you. Remember to keep it simple; baby doesn’t care if it’s a specially-designed cloth. Just give him something that smells like you.

- Tuck the item into baby’s sleeping area before lying him down. This will surround him with the scent from the very beginning and help ease the transition when you leave the room.

- If baby wakes in the night, give him several minutes to calm himself down before you go to him. Chances are, he will fall back asleep on his own within 10 minutes.

Secret #14. Take Away the Pacifier

It might seem pretty cruel to take away something that quiets baby’s cries, but keep in mind that the plan is to get baby to fall asleep by herself every time. You also want her to fall back asleep without help when she wakes in the middle of the night.

If she consistently sleeps with a pacifier, chances are, she’ll wake crying when it falls out. Since she can’t replace it herself, and because she has become used to sleeping with it, she will cry until you go stick it back in her mouth.

What happens if it falls out several times throughout the night? Are you going to go to her each time she loses it, in order to address her inability to sleep without it? Let’s avoid that situation entirely by training her to sleep without the pacifier.

There are two main ideas about how to break a baby of a pacifier: cold turkey and weaning her off.
Cold Turkey

Proponents of the cold turkey method sometimes propose taking the pacifier away in all instances, and some say only at sleep times. Though veterans of cold turkey admit that it will lead to a night or two without sleep and probably lots of crying, most have a positive view of the technique and say that it led to sounder sleeping for everyone in the family.

Weaning

If you plan to wean baby off the pacifier, start with naptime. Let her go to sleep with the pacifier, but when it falls out, don’t go to her immediately. Let her lay for 15 minutes or so before going in and replacing it.

She needs to get used to the idea of laying down for sleep without it. Repeat this process for the first few days, gradually increasing the amount of time you go before putting the pacifier back in her mouth.

After a few days of making her wait before you put the pacifier back, take it away from her before laying her down for a nap, and be prepared for fussiness. Allow her to cry for a few minutes before going to her, but don’t give back the pacifier.

This is your first major milestone, and it’s better to get it done during the day with naps than at bedtime.

When you go calm her during naptime, leave her lying down. Soothe her by patting her head, rubbing her tummy, and touching her gently. Let her know that you are there and that you love her, but don’t pick her up and don’t give back the pacifier.

After comforting her, leave the room again and wait another 15 minutes or so before you go back in, if she is still cranky. Repeat the process until she falls asleep.

After a few days of weaning her from the pacifier, once she is able to nap without it, repeat the process with bedtime. Be prepared for some fussiness and longer crying spells, but be strong. Soothe her as with the naps, but don’t ever give the pacifier back.

If you give it back to her, you will undo the work you’ve done and you will have to start over if you want to truly break her of it. You will also have taught her that crying for long enough will get her what she wants.

Instead, you want to teach her that she can sleep without the pacifier and that you will comfort her when she truly needs it, but not when she is doing ok.

Action Items:

• Make a plan for removing the pacifier. Decide if you will be going cold turkey or weaning her from it.
• Be sure to comfort baby throughout the process as she adjusts to sleeping without it, but don’t give back the pacifier.

• Keep track of how long it takes her to calm herself in the first few days, and monitor the quality of sleep she gets to determine if the technique is a useful one.
One Week or Less Solutions

Some solutions, such as those that start a pattern or routine with baby, take some time to put into place. The secrets shared here aren’t any more involved than the secrets in the earlier sections of the book, but they do take longer to make a difference.

When you’re looking for something to create a lasting change, look here. These aren’t immediate, need-it-now solutions. These are for when you’re ready to turn things around and make the steps necessary to teach baby good habits. After all, that’s what this is all really about.

When baby develops a habit of falling asleep and staying asleep, everyone wins. To make this a reality, give everyone time to adjust. This is going to mean lifestyle changes for you too, so be patient with yourself and baby.

You don’t have to love the idea of creating an evening routine for yourself and baby, but give it a chance. If you can’t commit to it, neither can baby.

So be patient and let yourself ease into things. Forgive yourself if you miss a day. Allow yourself to customize the solutions here to fit your lifestyle. Find something that works for you and your life.

The secrets are here. You just have to use them in a way that makes sense in your family. Good luck!

Secret #15. Create an Evening Routine

Humans thrive on routines, and babies are no exception. Routines make us feel comfortable, safe, and in control. These are all feelings that help us relax and ultimately, help us to fall asleep. Think about your own life – when you are stressed, confused, or fearful, it takes much longer to drift off than normal.

Just like you, baby needs a routine to feel like he knows what is happening and to remind him that he is safe. You are a big part of this routine, as you are the most familiar person to him.

Try to create a regular activity that he can associate with evening-time and sleep. That way, when he experiences it, he will think of sleeping and will be conditioned to get tired.

The Makeup of a Routine

Nighttime routines should be relaxing, nurturing, and encourage baby to sleep. Avoid regular activities where baby will be stimulated or excited, as these will wake baby up.
An important note is that the colors and images on TV or any other electronic screen, such as a computer, are very stimulating to our brains and should be avoided for at least an hour before bedtime.

Use this list as a starting point for creating your own nighttime activities:

- Giving baby a bath
- Reading a story together
- Cuddling between parent and baby
- Taking baby for a short walk around the neighborhood

These are all activities that encourage a bond between baby and parent, but don’t encourage baby to stay awake and engage with the parent.

**7 Tips for a Successful Routine**

Here are the keys to creating a successful, lasting evening routine:

1. **Parent and baby should be involved** – Baby needs to bond with you, and you with baby. You may be tempted to use feeding as bonding time, and this is one of the best ways to grow close, but nighttime routines where both parties are involved are also excellent ways to develop a relationship and build trust.

2. **Be consistent with the activity** – Whatever you choose for your routine, keep it consistent. Try to choose something that you can do every day, even when your schedules get busy.

3. **Pick activities that multiple adults can do** – Choose an activity that any guardian of the baby can be involved in. This way, when you hire a babysitter for an evening or ask a family member to fill in for you, baby’s routine stays consistent. Though baby will know that it isn’t you with him, it’s good for him to know that he can trust multiple people.

4. **Switch off with the other primary caregiver** – If you raise baby with another primary caregiver, such as a spouse or a family member, make sure that you and that person regularly go through the nighttime routine with baby.

You've surely heard of babies who can’t go to sleep unless a certain person is near, and we want to avoid this habit in your own family. Baby should be comfortable going through his routine with the most important people in his life.

5. **Pick a convenient time** – The nighttime routine should happen at the same time each night. Timing is just as important as the activity itself, so that baby starts to get tired at the same time each night. You have to have
both pieces working together – timing and consistent activity – in order to be successful.

6. **Choose relaxing activities** – As mentioned above, choosing activities that encourage baby’s relaxation and sense of well-being are essential to creating a successful evening routine *that promotes sleep*. It’s easy to develop a habit for baby for nighttime activities, even if they are unhelpful activities. Be sure to watch your own actions so you don’t unwittingly undo your own work.

7. **Clear your mind** – Baby can sense your emotions, and if you are nervous or upset, baby will be too. When it comes time for the nightly routine, make an effort to let go of the worries of the day. This will help baby relax and promote falling asleep.

**Let Yourself Adjust**

Once you’ve settled on your evening routine, give it a few days to get settled. You might have to adjust the time everything gets started or in some other way modify your routine. Give yourself permission to find what works for you. Remember, if you try to force this into your already busy lifestyle, it will fail. Instead, adapt the routine to your lives so that it fits naturally and so you feel that it’s possible to stick with this every day.

**Action Items:**

- Put together a list of nighttime activities for your routine
- Work closely with the other primary caregiver who will be switching off with you so you are both familiar with the plan
- Introduce baby to the new routine and stick with it
- Allow yourself to adjust the activities or the time until you find something that works
- Once you’ve settled on what to do and when to do it, be consistent, making sure this happens every day

**Secret #16. Mimic the Feeling of the Womb**

For the entire beginning of their lives, babies are accustomed to one environment: the womb. It can be very jarring to come into a new world with so much new stimuli, and it can cause a feeling of insecurity in baby. The best way
to help baby make the transition and feel safe is to mimic some of the feelings of the womb.

**Characteristics of the Womb**

So what does the womb have that your house doesn't? Let's think about the environment baby is familiar with:

- Lots of white noise – he’s used to a very loud environment, what with the outside noises mixing with the sounds of the body's machinery
- Cramped quarters – he’s used to existing in a very small space, where everything is close together
- Feeling supported – he’s used to being touched and supported on the sides and bottom of the womb, which creates a sense of comfort from being touched
- Fetal position – he’s accustomed to laying in the fetal position, with the arms and legs drawn up and close to the body

As you read this, birth might seem to come as a relief. To us, the womb doesn't seem very comfortable, but to baby, it’s home. You can ease the transition and help baby sleep by mimicking some of these qualities.

*Action Items:*

- Identify what makes baby feel comfortable and safe
- Test different techniques to see what strategies mimic the womb most accurately for your baby

**Why Should You Recreate the Feeling?**

We’ve already talked about this, but it’s important enough to say again. Babies, even in the womb, are extremely sensitive to emotions and feelings. Just like you, baby doesn’t sleep well if she’s not relaxed and feeling safe.

It comes as a domino effect: if baby is anxious or in some other way emotionally upset, she can't relax. When she can't relax, and you put her to bed and leave, she gets more upset, which makes it take even longer to relax. Until she relaxes, she can’t fall asleep, and crying ensues.
Strategies for Mimicking the Womb

By this time, you’re probably already using white noise, so we won’t talk about that anymore. If you need a refresher, see tip 3 of this guide, Use White Noise, in the Need Help Right Now? section.

Bathe baby in a bucket

There are a host of products available that offer an alternative to a mini-adult-like bath. Baths can be a pivotal time each day to help baby relax and get ready to sleep, mostly because being immersed in water reminds them of being in the womb.

Naturally, you can see that how you bathe baby becomes an important part of helping baby calm down and fall asleep. Babies feel most comfortable in the fetal position, and a bucket provides this capability.

It supports baby’s weight and allows her to be touched on the sides and the bottom of the bucket, again reminding her of the womb.

A bucket is a natural choice for a bath because it almost forces baby into the fetal position. This combined with warm water and the tightness of baby touching the sides and bottom of the bucket work together to recreate the feeling of the womb.

As opposed to a bucket, a mini-adult-like bath gives baby the feeling of swimming, like in the womb, but makes her feel a bit lost, with nothing to control her arms and legs from floating around.

I know, it seems almost cruel to put your baby in a bucket, right? Think outside the box! It only seems strange because not many people do it...in the United States, that is. Bathing baby in a bucket is a popular form of baby care in Europe and is accepted as helping to calm and reassure babies in this big new world.

Quick tip: there’s no need to go buy an expensive baby bathing bucket, though you certainly can. Use what you have at home, but be sure to choose a bucket you have not used with harsh chemicals.

Think of a bucket used to build sand castles, perhaps. If possible, find a bucket with flexible sides, so that baby is supported softly and without any sharp edges or seams.

Action Items:

- Find a baby-sized bucket in the house and thoroughly clean it, or purchase a new one
- Confirm that the bucket is flexible, smooth, and won’t tip over when baby is inside
• Test a bath to see if baby likes the feeling of a bucket better than a traditional baby bath

**Swaddle baby**

Swaddling baby can help her relax and settle down because it mimics the close quarters of the womb. Babies can be unsettled by the free use of their arms and legs after birth, a feeling they didn’t have in the womb.

Additionally, babies tend to jerk a bit upon falling asleep and can wake themselves up or become startled by these natural movements.

Swaddling baby all the time is fine for the first month of life; after that, baby needs access to her arms and legs to develop properly. However, you can still swaddle baby for naps and nighttime to help her sleep.

*So what is swaddling?*

Swaddling is wrapping baby tightly in a blanket to mimic the feeling of the womb. Swaddling reminds baby of the safety and compact feeling of the womb.

**How to swaddle baby**

1. Lay a baby blanket on the floor and fold one corner into the center about 6 inches

2. Lay baby on her back on the blanket, with her head at the folded-down corner. The head should be off the blanket so it’s free

3. Take the corner near baby’s left hand and pull it across baby to the right, securing it underneath baby

4. Fold up the bottom of the blanket towards baby’s chin, enclosing baby’s feet

5. Take the corner near baby’s right hand and pull it across baby to the left, securing it underneath baby

**Important tips**

• Swaddle baby when she is full, clean, and dry. Swaddling is meant to be a comfortable, comforting experience for baby, and if she is in some way unsettled, she will associate bad memories with swaddling.

• Don’t swaddle baby when it is very hot. Keep baby from overheating by not swaddling when it is very hot outside or when baby is in a warm room. This is especially important when baby is going to sleep, as overheating is a risk factor for SIDS.
• Listen to baby so you know when she wants out. Baby will kick or squirm when she wants to be free, so pay attention for these actions. Let baby out if you know she is uncomfortable, or the feeling can cause distress and keep baby from relaxing.

• Don’t swaddle baby constantly after the age of one month. She needs access to her limbs in order to develop correctly.

**Action Items:**

• Find or buy a baby blanket

• Practice swaddling a doll before attempting it on your live, squirming baby

• Pay attention to baby’s reaction to being swaddled and adjust if necessary

**Sway and Shush**

When a mother moves around doing daily tasks, a baby in the womb is naturally swung gently from side to side. This swaying motion becomes familiar and comforting, so parents can try using this as a means of calming baby before sleep.

Remember, this isn’t the kind of thing that you want to do every time that baby wakes up, or you will have to repeatedly get up in the middle of the night.

Instead, this is what you want to do to help settle baby down so that she can fall asleep on her own. When swaying baby, be gentle and consistent. She should fall into a sort of rhythm that helps calm her.

Swaying shouldn’t be fast or exciting, as it’s meant to relax baby. Sway her too fast and she’ll think it’s playtime instead!

Shushing is another technique that mimics the womb. This is similar to the sounds that baby hears in the womb and can also be quieting. As with swaying, shushing should be gentle and rhythmic.

It should be smooth and mimic the pattern of baby’s breathing – one “shush” per exhale.

Shushing should be soft, not harsh; avoid the sound a teacher makes when quieting her classroom. Instead, use shushing as a sort of white noise, meant to calm baby without her ever even realizing it.

**Action Items:**
• Sing a song in your head while you sway or shush to help create a slow rhythm

• Try different speeds and voice levels to find out what quiets baby best

**Wear Baby**

Another solution that feels similar to the womb is wearing baby in a sling, wrap, or pouch. This has benefits for you, because it allows you to be close to baby while keeping your hands free, and it makes baby feel protected, safe, and comfortable.

Wearing baby helps keep baby warm, lets her hear your heartbeat, and builds a close relationship that is fostered through personal contact. Listed here are a few options for wearing baby, but it’s up to you to decide which solution is best and most comfortable for you and baby:

• **Wrap** – wraps are long pieces of fabric tied to the wearer in various positions. Baby folds up inside it and it is very versatile. This is best for small babies; larger children will have trouble fitting, and it could be uncomfortable for the wearer.

• **Mei Tai** – an Asian-inspired carrier with more structure than a wrap. It can be worn on the front, back, or hip, depending on comfort and baby’s size. This is a viable option for larger or older babies.

• **Adjustable pouch** – a pouch is a circle of fabric tied onto the wearer’s front that holds the baby into the wearer’s chest. It is similar to a Mei Tai and is also good for babies of all sizes.

**Action Items:**

• Evaluate your needs and baby’s size to determine which style is right for you

• Practice tying on a wrap, sling or pouch with a doll prior to working with baby

• Adjust the fit as necessary – if baby seems uncomfortable, evaluate her fit to see if anything is rubbing or pinching. Try putting baby in while sitting down to see if this helps

• Consider different options as baby grows and your activities change. Some ways to wear baby are more appropriate for some types of activities than others
Secret #17. Leave Baby Lying Down

This technique is especially helpful for when baby wakes up in the middle of the night. It also works if you have settled baby in, but he won’t nod off. The secret to getting baby to fall asleep on his own is to keep him lying down when you comfort him. Let’s talk about why.

If baby cries or fusses and you pick him up to comfort him, he learns that crying and fussing is a way to get your attention. He learns that you will only hold out so long when he is crying before you give him what he wants.

Instead of reinforcing this idea, you want to teach baby that it’s ok to wake up in the middle of the night, and that he should first try to fall asleep on his own before crying for help.

This also helps you determine if you are needed. If baby always cries when he wakes up, you won’t have a way of knowing if he’s crying because he’s hungry or wet or in some other distress, or if he’s just accustomed to having you around when he falls asleep.

You want to teach him that it’s perfectly acceptable to fall asleep when lying down, by himself. Mimic the conditions he’ll experience when he wakes up in the middle of the night, and those middle of the night wakings will become less traumatic for him.

So what do you do if you don’t pick him up? When baby cries or fusses when you first lay him down, try this strategy:

1. Give him a few minutes to work things out for himself. If it’s been about 10 minutes and he still hasn’t gotten settled, go to him.

2. Instead of picking him up, lean over him so that he can see you.

3. Rub his tummy, pat his head, or in some way touch him so he knows that you care and are there to take care of him.

4. Engage with him quietly for a few minutes, then leave the area.

5. Don’t return for another 5-10 minutes, so you give him time to fall back asleep himself.

6. If after that 5-10 minutes he’s still fussing, repeat steps 2-5.

7. Don’t pick him up, no matter how many times you have to go to him.

If you find that he needs to be changed, keep him lying down for this. The only time you might need to pick him up is if you are breast-feeding or if your feeding routine doesn’t allow for you to leave him lying down.
However, it is possible to give him a bottle while keeping him lying down. Do your best to minimize how many times you pick him up, but do what you need to in order to meet his basic needs.

Keeping baby lying down is a strategy that works, but it will take a few days. If baby is accustomed to you picking him up when he fusses, either when you first lay him down or throughout the night, he won’t change his habits immediately.

However, you will help develop a good habit in him, that of waking up lying down and falling back asleep while still lying down. Teach him that this is ok and you will save yourself a lot of sleepless nights!

*Action Items:*

- Decide in what events you will pick up baby BEFORE you lay him down for the night
- Follow Steps 1-7 listed above when you first lay baby down and throughout the night
- Be disciplined about only picking up baby when you decided you would; go back every 10 minutes as many times as you have to

**Secret #18. Make Nighttime Boring**

In order to get baby to recognize a difference between day and night, you have to make one exciting and one boring. Nighttime should be the boring event, because then baby has nothing to keep her awake and excited. When she’s convinced that she’s not missing anything, she will more easily fall asleep.

There are several ways to keep nighttime from being stimulating and exciting for baby:

- **Dim the lights** – Keep the lighting lower than normal in the rooms where you spend the most time each evening. This will probably be the living or family room, baby's room, and the kitchen or eating area.

- **Choose quiet activities** – This tip doesn’t work if you regularly host dinner parties, but if you have a choice, choose quiet nighttime activities, such as reading or working on a hobby.

- **Keep the TV volume low** – When watching TV or a movie, keep the volume reasonable so that it doesn’t encourage baby to pay attention and stay awake.
• **Don’t argue** – Baby will pick up on your mood as well as your tone and volume of voice. Wait to discuss things with other family members until baby is asleep so that you don’t distress her just before bedtime.

• **Make baby play on her own** – When baby is old enough, put her in her playpen or in a swing and let her entertain herself. She will get bored easier, and put her in the mood for sleep when she recognizes that there is nothing more entertaining going on.

Obviously it’s not always possible to follow this tip, as your life will throw unexpected visitors, overnight guests, major sporting events, and the like at you. When possible, shield baby from these events by sticking to her normal routine as much as possible. Don’t let her be part of the action unless it’s unavoidable.

**Action Items:**

• Evaluate your routine to see if making nighttime boring is an option for your family.

• If so, determine two or three ways you can adjust your evening activities to make them less stimulating and exciting for baby.

• Spend a few days implementing these new ideas and watch for the results. Give it some time, as the adjustment can take several days.

**Secret #19. Associate an Item with Nighttime**

Falling and staying asleep is dependent on understanding when it is time to sleep. If baby expects to fall asleep once he receives a certain stimuli, he will train himself to do so with ease.

What’s the secret stimulus? An item or other physical reminder that baby only gets at bedtime. Baby will come to recognize this item with nighttime and sleeping, and it will be a trigger to help baby calm down and get sleepy.

What kinds of items work well? Try these suggestions:

• **A stuffed toy** – be careful to wait until baby is old enough for this to be safe

• **Clothing** – don’t allow baby to fall asleep wearing regular clothes. Always put baby in pajamas before sleep so he’ll associate certain types of clothes with certain actions

• **A scent** – Use a calming aroma in baby’s room, such as lavender or chamomile. Scent is a powerful memory tool, and regularly smelling a
scent before falling asleep will help baby sleep faster when he does smell it

- **A baby blanket** – Babies tend to get attached to a blanket as they grow, and you can put this attachment to good use. Only let baby have the blanket at nighttime or naptime. Or, you could wrap baby in the blanket after a bath to help snuggle him in before he sleeps.

Once you’ve chosen your item, be consistent with it. Baby needs to see or feel it every time he goes to sleep, or he won’t truly associate sleep with it. It is an all-or-nothing scenario for the first few weeks. Once you have trained baby to recognize the item and associate it with sleep, you can be less diligent.

One important thing to note with this strategy is that baby is likely to train himself to sleep with the item. It could cause problems if baby associates so deeply with the item that he cannot fall asleep without it.

To avoid this, be consistent for the first few weeks as baby develops an association between the item and sleep. Then, allow yourself to relax, providing the item most nights but not every night. Baby will still have enough input to recognize that the item and sleep are associated, but he won’t depend on it to fall asleep.

If the item becomes a necessity for sleep, you could get in trouble. Such a rigid routine makes life changes difficult, such as travel, holidays, or if the item is lost or unavailable.

**Action Items:**

- Choose an item to associate with bedtime. Ensure that it will be available most evenings and naptimes.

- Introduce the item to baby shortly before you want him to fall asleep.

- Be disciplined in providing baby the item or stimulus each time he falls asleep for the first few weeks.

- Only allow baby to have the item when he is getting ready for sleep.

- After a few weeks (max of 3), gently teach baby that it is ok not to have the item by skipping a few nights but usually providing the item.
Long-Term Solutions

Welcome to the end game. The short-term solutions have taken hold, and you’re well on your way to creating a routine that works for you and baby. There are still a few tips and tricks out there to make sure that baby’s new-found sleeping abilities don’t fade away.

Use these tips to cement your baby’s sleep habits and allow you to return to normal life. These are tips that look beyond the home and try to identify anything that could be jeopardizing baby’s sleep. Congratulations on getting your nights back on track! Let’s finish this up right.

Secret #20. Implement Daily Naps

It’s likely that you already have baby napping throughout the day, but it’s also likely that baby doesn’t have a set schedule for naps. He may not be napping the right amount of time or with enough frequency.

There’s no one answer for everyone, so don’t be fooled. These ideas are guidelines only, and you have to find the right balance for your baby. The key here is to have something consistent for your baby – fight to put baby to sleep at the same time each day for a nap to help build a routine and an understanding about sleep times.

Consider the Length of Naps

A general rule is that babies shouldn’t sleep for more than 2 or 3 hours at a time. In the beginning, babies won’t even be able to sleep that long because they will be eating more frequently. But as they grow, you can stretch out their sleeping time to train them to eat a little less frequently.

Babies who nap for longer than a few hours may trick their system into thinking it’s nighttime. It will then be harder for them to fall asleep when it truly is time for bed. This is yet another way to help babies learn the difference between naps and nighttime sleeping.

Consider the Frequency of Naps

The frequency that baby will nap depends a lot on his age. Newborns will sleep up to 16 hours a day, waking for feeding and little else. As he gets a bit older, baby will be awake for longer.

Always be on the look-out for the right amount of time between baby’s naps. As baby grows, you can extend the time between naps for up to a couple of hours, but generally no more.
It’s not unusual for toddlers of a year or two to have a morning nap and an afternoon nap. In this age group, toddlers will extend the amount of waking time to about 4 hours between naps.

**Consider the Timing of Naps**

Timing is important, since naps can detract from nighttime sleeping if done wrong. Try to have several hours between the time baby wakes up and when he goes to sleep for the night. Toddlers of a year or two need 3 to 4 hours between their last nap and their nighttime sleep.

Another reason why it’s good to keep some time between the last nap and bedtime is to create a difference in baby’s mind about what a nap is and what sleep is. A nap should be understood to be short, during the day, and meant to help refuel baby.

Alternatively, sleeping for the night is for relaxing, restoring, and preparing for the next day. Baby should have enough time between the two to actually get sleepy again and to feel a difference between the nap and bedtime.

**Action Items:**

- Plan out a daily schedule with naps. Spend a day or two observing what baby’s natural tendency is, then build a schedule around it.

- Make sure that baby has a few hours between the last nap of the day and bedtime.

- Be consistent about nap times and durations.

**Secret #21. Predict your Baby’s Sleep Cycle**

This can be one of the hardest things for a caregiver to do, so it’s not unusual that most parents don’t. However, one of the best sleep secrets you’ll learn in this guide is right here: you have to get baby to bed before she thinks she’s tired.

A common misconception about getting babies to sleep is that you want to wait until they are really, really tired to put them to bed, because then they will sleep better. However, babies aren’t like adults.

Adults can fall into bed exhausted from a long day and drop into a deep sleep quickly. Babies aren’t that way.

When you put an over-tired baby to sleep, her first inclination is to fight the tiredness. She wants to stay awake, just when she needs to sleep the most. How do you avoid this scenario? Learn baby’s sleep cycles so you know when she’s going to be getting tired.
If you can get ahead of her sleepiness, you can help her drift off faster. This takes a lot of observation and trial and error, so be patient. You are going to have to keep track of sleep times for a week or two to detect a pattern and get ahead of the situation.

**Keep a journal**

The first step to predicting baby's sleep cycles is to keep a journal of your observations. Organize it by day, and break things down so they are easy for you to read through quickly. Be specific with times; keep a watch with you so you have an accurate record of baby's habits.

Pay attention to the following things:

- When you lay baby down for a sleep session (either a nap or to sleep at night)
- How long it takes baby to fall asleep each time
- When baby wakes up during the sleep session, and a total of how many times she wakes up during each sleep session
- What time baby starts to get fussy

What are you looking for here? You want to pay attention to when baby gets fussy in relation to her nap times and nighttime sleeping. You need to know how long it takes her to fall asleep and if she generally wakes up several times during each sleep session or only at night.

Each piece of information helps create a comprehensive picture of baby and will help you get her to bed at the right times.

How long do you need to track her sleep patterns? Write down the observations for no less than a week. This should be a normal period of your life – you don't want to be observing baby during the holidays or some other disruptive period of the year, where baby is not likely to have her normal schedule.

If possible, jot down notes for two weeks. If you feel that you have an accurate picture after just one week, go for it. There's no set schedule, but the more data you have, the more complete a picture you will create.

**What to do with the data**

Now that you've tracked all this, what do you do with the knowledge? First of all, look for patterns.

Does baby tend to get crabby an hour and a half after she wakes up from her morning nap?
Does her mid-day nap not go so well? This is a sign that baby is staying awake too long between naps, even if it’s just an hour and a half.

Here’s an example: Baby wakes up at 10 am from her morning nap. Dad feeds her and plays with her. It’s now 11 am. Baby starts to get fussy, so Dad changes her diaper. The fussiness worsens until her normal 11:30 am naptime, but it takes baby 20 minutes to fall asleep because she is already too tired.

This schedule needs to be cut down so that Dad has baby in bed before she gets fussy or right as she gets fussy.

Each baby is different, so while it’s important to look at statistics and generalizations about how long babies will be awake for each day, you really have to focus on the reality for your baby. If baby can only be awake for one hour before she starts to get sleepy again, so be it. Your job isn’t to try to manipulate this tendency. Your job is to work with it so you get baby in bed when she needs it.

Once you’ve found the patterns...

...make a game plan. Shoot for a few key times during the day where you can make an immediate change. Start with the most difficult time to get baby to fall asleep. Even if baby doesn’t get too fussy, if she takes a long time to fall asleep, it could be because she’s over-tired and fighting it.

Try this experiment: for a few days, put baby to bed 20 minutes before the normal time that is the hardest for her to get to sleep. Keep everything else about your routine the same, but simply move up bedtime.

Keep writing in that journal to see if a shift occurs in baby. Pay attention to how long it takes her to fall asleep and her level of fussiness before bedtime.

If you find that baby is still fussy, try moving up bedtime by another 10 minutes. It’s possible that you’ve simply been keeping baby awake for too long without realizing it.

Some families have to move up bedtime by several hours, but this doesn’t mean you’ve been doing something wrong. It’s simply a way for us to optimize baby’s sleep patterns to help everyone rest easier.

Action Items:

- Spend a week or two observing and cataloging baby’s sleep habits. Keep the journal organized and orderly, so patterns are easily recognizable.

- Analyze the journal to identify a few key places where baby could be overtired before sleeping, thus affecting baby’s sleep.
• Experiment with the sleep session with the most potential for improvement. Try putting baby to bed 20 minutes before normal for a few days. Note the results.

• Adjust the experiment to move up bedtime by another 10 minutes if you don't see the kind of improvement you want. This can be repeated several times, depending on your needs.

**Secret #22. Confirm Daycare Practices**

Chances are, you are not the only caregiver for your baby. If you don't send him to daycare, you have a babysitter or a family member who helps you when needed. If these people are not living with you, it is difficult to observe how they are handling baby’s sleep sessions.

Not knowing what your daycare does to help baby fall asleep can undo all the good work you've done. It’s unlikely that the daycare is doing anything intentionally to create bad habits in baby; more likely, they are doing everything possible to ensure that baby gets the sleep he needs when you are not available.

However, the daycare’s methods can be contradictory to your own. For instance, if you are trying to teach baby to fall asleep without you in the middle of the night, you don’t want baby becoming accustomed to having a bottle before sleeping each time.

If you’re not specific with your daycare, it's entirely possible that they will give him a bottle before putting him down for a nap.

When daycare, or anyone, contradicts your practices, it makes it that much harder to instill good habits in baby. Baby will become confused about the patterns he sees in the different places and will not truly learn the routines you want him to follow.

Thankfully, there’s an easy solution to this problem. When you choose a caregiver, be explicit about how you want baby’s sleep sessions to be handled. If you have already been working with a daycare when you start sleep training, ask for a short meeting.

Explain what you are doing at home, and give the daycare instructions on how they are to handle your son.

There’s a right and a wrong way to approach this issue with a daycare. Daycare workers are trained in early childhood development and have extensive experience working with babies just like yours. They don't want to be told how to do their jobs any more than you want to be told how to do yours.
That said, you are the parent and have every right to oversee the treatment of your child when he is in their care.

Be gentle but specific about what you want from the daycare. Try giving them a list with these points listed out:

- A brief summary of the sleep training you are doing
- Special instructions on when baby should be put to sleep; are you training baby to take 3 naps during the day at specific times? Share these times with the daycare
- Special instructions on the events leading up to baby sleeping; do you want to avoid giving baby a bottle before sleep? Do you want to make sure that baby has 20 minutes of playtime before sleep?
- Special instructions on what to do if baby wakes up during a nap; do you want the daycare to wait no less than 10 minutes before going to baby? Do you want the daycare to leave baby lying down when he wakes up?
- Contact information in case the daycare has questions about this new schedule

This exchange should be positive and supportive. Affirm your confidence in the daycare and ask for their help like a partnership. Recognize that it may not always be possible for the daycare to meet your requirements due to the other children in their care.

But most of all, understand that they will be much more likely to try to accommodate you if you present your plan in a positive, non-threatening, and supportive way.

**When choosing a new daycare**

If you’re new to daycare, ask these key questions as you evaluate potential caregivers:

1. Is there a set nap schedule for all babies in the daycare?
2. How are babies handled if they wake up during naptime?
3. Does the daycare subscribe to a particular sleep training philosophy? Does it match with your own?
4. What is the normal rhythm of a day?
5. How long before naptime will baby be fed?
6. How does the daycare handle fussy babies at naptime?

These questions will help you get a sense of the daycare and if it matches with your needs. Be willing to move on if you feel uncomfortable with their practices, but recognize that you are never going to be completely comfortable giving baby’s care over to anyone else. This is a normal feeling, but one you must learn to control and harness.

Action Items:

• Ask your daycare what their current practices are around baby’s naptime

• Draw up a printed document to explain your needs and how they can help you

• Schedule a meeting with the daycare to discuss your changing needs

• Stay positive but firm in your discussions with them about baby’s sleep training

• If appropriate, write out questions ahead of time to ask potential daycares about their sleep schedules

• Don’t settle for a caregiver that does not support your needs. Recognize that they are doing the best they can, but that there might be a better fit for you elsewhere
Conclusion

If you’ve made it this far in the guide, you probably know our key themes: routine, consistency, and patience. It doesn’t matter if you’re brand new to sleep training or if you’re looking for a new philosophy that finally works. What we’ve given you here are usable tips, tricks, and step-by-step instructions.

Give it a try, but remember to step back for a moment and give yourself time to plan. If you want to be successful, keep focusing on how you can repeat this action in the coming days, weeks, and months. This kind of outlook is your best bet to creating healthy sleep habits in babies. Let’s explore our themes one last time.

Routine

Babies crave routines, as do all humans. They make us feel safe and like we know our place in the world.

If you aren’t able to give baby a series of actions or activities performed each day before sleep, try for a routine in environment or timing.

Routines don’t have to be cumbersome, and they’re not meant to change your life. Instead, they’re designed to build recognition in baby; when the routine starts, baby’s natural inclination will be to get sleepy and to fall asleep easier and faster. It’s all about conditioning.

Consistency

Consistency is key in all instances of sleep training. You must be consistent in your actions in order to create habits in baby. If she never knows what is coming next, or if you sometimes enforce something but other times let her actions slide, she will never truly learn.

Be consistent in your training. Make it a point to be part of the strategies you are employing, even if it includes a sacrifice on your part. It will help you form a closer bond with baby and let her know that you are there and that you care.

Patience

More than anything, you must be patient with yourself. Sleep training is a frustrating process, but it yields great rewards. Stick with it, no matter what. It’s worth the discomfort of a few days or weeks to have a well-organized, well-rested family.
You also need patience with baby. If you let her get away with bad habits from birth, she’s not going to want to change easily, even if the new habits are better for her. Remember that when you feel like you are going over the edge, call in help and get out of the situation. It’s never a bad thing to let someone else take over.

Finally, have patience with other caregivers. No one is ever going to carry out a philosophy in exactly the same way, but that doesn’t mean that their methods are wrong. Give each other permission to deviate slightly from the plan, but hold each other accountable for being consistent in practices. Work together for holistic training for baby, so that she is comfortable with multiple people when she has trouble sleeping.

**Closing Thoughts**

I know it can seem like there’s no relief ahead, but don’t give up! You are so close to putting a few simple practices in place to help yourself and baby. You can do this. Keep this guide to look back on; review the secrets anytime and tweak them as you need to.

This is just a guide, not a guarantee for getting baby to sleep. Use these solutions alone or in combination until you find something that works for you. Adapt them to your life and add slowly, giving baby time to adjust.

Welcome to the land of disciplined, well-rested babies!