

SLEEP TRAINING METHODS

There are many ways families can help their babies develop healthy sleep habits. Some involve a lot of crying, but others involve minimal (or no) tears. Establishing healthy sleep habits is very important for the health and development of your child. It is also important for the entire family's well-being.

You are establishing the blueprints of your child's sleeping habits- so start now! There is no right or wrong method of sleep training; it all comes down to your unique baby, and your unique parenting style. What works well for some babies does not work well for others, so do not be surprised if the techniques your friends or family members recommend don't work the same way for your baby. The bottom line is to pick a technique that you feel comfortable with, and that you think will work well with your baby's temperament.

Common Sleep Training Techniques

The Fading Sleep Training Method

This is a very gentle, no-cry (or very little cry) method of sleep training. With the Fading method, you continue to help your baby fall asleep (by rocking or feeding to sleep, for instance), but over time, you gradually do less and less of the 'work' to put your baby to sleep, and your baby does more and more. For instance, if you normally rock your baby completely to sleep, you may shorten the amount of time you rock each night, until you are rocking for only a few minutes and placing your infant in their crib when they are almost but not sound asleep. This method requires lots of patience on the parents' part, but it's great for families who want to minimize crying as much as possible.

The Pick-Up-Put-Down Sleep Training Method

This is another gentle technique. The PUPD method works just the way it sounds: when it's time to sleep, and your baby is fussing in his crib or bassinet, you pick him up and comfort him until he's calm and drowsy. Then, you put him back in his crib to sleep, repeating this cycle until your baby is finally asleep. PUPD is another method that requires a lot of patience, and it won't work for every baby; some babies find being picked up and put down so often overstimulating, and they gradually become worked up, instead of relaxed.

The Chair Method For Sleep Training

This method involves more tears than the previous two; however, you don't leave your baby unattended in the room at all. Here's how the chair method works: start by doing your normal bedtime routine. Then, put a chair very near the crib and sit on it while your baby falls asleep. The goal is not to help your child fall asleep, nor to help her calm down. You are generally not supposed to give your child any attention. The reason you are in the chair is only to reassure them that you are there with them. Each night you move the chair farther and farther away from the crib until you are right outside the door, until eventually, you no longer need the chair at all.

It can be difficult to avoid engaging with your child, and it will likely be a little confusing to the child (particularly younger ones) when you don't. However, with time and consistency, this can be a good option for parents who do not want to leave their child alone to cry but who haven't had success with other methods, either. This method generally works over the course of about 5-7 days. Giving up before this sabotages the good sleep habits that you have already started for your baby.

The Check-And-Console Sleep Training Method (aka "Ferberizing"), which should not be attempted earlier than 9 months of age.

This is considered a "cry it out" method of sleep training. This technique entails allowing baby to cry while checking on him at intervals. The goal here is to reassure him every so often that you are nearby, and to reassure yourself that he is okay. When you go to check on baby, you are not supposed to pick him up nor engage him much, but simply reassure using your voice and a loving pat for 2-3 minutes, tops (watch the clock!). With this method, the goal is NOT to help baby fall asleep - that is what he is learning to do on his own! Instead, the idea is that he falls asleep on his own, in the same "environment" in which he will awaken periodically throughout the night. The knowledge of how to fall asleep unassisted at bedtime will pave the way for him/her to go BACK to sleep throughout the night. Over time, you gradually increase the amount of time between your 'checks'. The first night, you might check on your baby every 10 minutes; the next night, you would check every 15 minutes. Continue increasing your 'check' intervals by about 5 minutes every night.

Dr. Harvey Karp's The Twinkle Interruptus Method.

-Give your child a lovey each night. Many parents pick a small softly stuffed animal or doll, which does not have any removable parts like ribbons, buttons, eyes, nose or mouth.

-At bedtime snuggle with your child in their bed and begin singing a song after a few choruses, shoot your finger into the air as if you remembered something important. Announce, "Wait! Wait! I forgot to kiss Mommy or Daddy. Here, hold Teddy. I'll be RIGHT back." Hurry out for 1-2 minutes. Over the course of a week your child will remember that when you said, "Wait! Wait!" and left, you would be right back. Quietly go back to your child after the 1-2 minutes saying something like "Good waiting! Good waiting!" Immediately cuddle up with your child and start singing again. Another few minutes, repeat the same "Wait! Wait!" routine, but this time disappear for 5 minutes.

Again, upon returning repeat, "Good waiting! Good waiting!" and sing to your child until she falls asleep.

The next night, repeat the same actions—but your first exit lasts for 10 minutes and your second lasts for a full minute You'll really have fun with this approach. It works about 75% of the time for kids over 18 months of age.

If your tot cries when you leave, immediately return to comfort her—she may be experiencing some special stress, anxiety or fear. Over the next few days, keep doing *patience stretching* during the day, white noise for sleeping times and make sure she has a lovey to hold when you go away. Next, when you try *twinkle interruptus* again, don't leave the room. After saying, "Wait! Wait!" simply go across the room and pretend to be searching for something. Gradually increase the amount of time you spend on the other side of the room. If your child tolerates that well after a couple of days, try leaving the room for a short period again. Please don't think of this as *devious*. But everyone is tired and has low frustration tolerance at bedtime, so this is a better time to be a little tricky than to enter into a battle of wills.

Another technique - after you've tried other comforting things like [loveys](#) and white noise - is to give your child a "ticket" or token and if they get out of bed they give you the ticket. If it is still on the nightstand in the morning, they can snuggle for a quick story in the morning for 5-10 minutes. Over the course of a week, they can trade them in for a "campout" with you on the weekends in your room or special snuggle time in your bed in the evening or in the morning on the weekends when you have more time.

Successful Sleep Training

No matter which method you choose, remember that you need to stick with it for at least two weeks (maybe three) before you decide it's not working and give up. Some babies take awhile to adjust to a new way of sleeping. And remember with ANY sleep training method, **consistency is key**.

Good luck!