



# Parents' Guides

# Bedtime Routines

We all need a little support and advice, from time to time.

Here are some helpful starting points for parents of adopted and previously in care children.

This guide is not manual for all children, they are there as a starting point to help and assist with some common challenges.

Please seek more specialist support and advice if you have any concerns.





# Bedtime Routine



There is no doubt that a good night's sleep and being prepared for the next day will lead to a smoother start for all. This will mean that everyone has a greater chance of getting to work and school on time.

Every family is different, and you will need to find a way that works for your family and the needs of the children and adults with in it. Remember children thrive on routine and predictable patterns of the day.

**Routine** Establishing good bedtime routines helps everyone in the family to know the expectations, predict the pattern of the process and to move forward to a calmer good night.



**Planning** In turn this leads to an easier start to the morning and to a better day at school. We know that a good start to the day helps children to better manage the challenges of the school day.



**Realistic** There is a direct correlation between the time that you have your evening meal and the time that you eventually get the children to bed. If you have a late tea, then expect that by the time the children have completed all the routines to get to bed, then that will be a later time too.



**Timing** If you want the children in bed earlier then you need to shift the time of tea forward. To shift your children's bedtimes we would recommend that you do this by daily increments of 10 minutes. For example if your tea time is currently 6.30pm try bringing it forward to 6.20pm the next day.

**Pace** Roughly estimate the time it takes to get things done e.g. bath time (or shower), cleaning teeth, story time (1 story or 2), hugs and kisses etc.



**Relax** Be realistic and allow extra time for smoothing out issues. Factor these in to your routines.

**Prepare** Plan in to your evening schedule a preparation time for the things that you will need the following day; work bags, school bags, packed lunches, water bottles, return slips for letters, homework etc. Have this ready to go as it will save you precious minutes in the morning.



## Things to consider...

- Not all routines suit all children
- Keep bedtime quiet and calm
- Plan the wind down as part of your routine
- Allow time for the transition points dinner to bath, to bed, to story, to goodnight...



# Bedtime Routine

## Calm

Avoid stimulating activities an hour before bed, so move away from tv, gadgets and electronic devices in this time. Find other things that they like to do, listening to stories, colouring, having a bath time etc.



## Visual

Consider having a visual plan so that children can see that they are getting closer to sleep time. This doesn't need to have specific times on it, but should show the usual order of events leading to bedtime.



## Sooth

Think about the foods and drinks that they are consuming before bed and try to avoid anything sugary. Go for calming and soothing foods that will aid relaxation. Some children sleep better with a small snack before bed.



## Sensory

Consider your child's sensory needs; what will help them to settle best? Do they need to have a bed that is covered in, maybe create one by making a tent over their bed? Or sleep on the bottom part of a bunk bed and drape fabric/blankets over the sides to make it feel more enclosed. Always check that they have good ventilation!



## Space

Consider the lighting levels in the bedroom. Do you have different kinds of lighting and levels of brightness. Can they feel safe by switching a small light on in the night if they need to? Do you need to have a nightlight on all night? Start to reduce the light levels as you get nearer to lights out. Likewise gradually increase the levels as they are waking up in the morning.



## Relax

Does your child need a series of songs to help them know that bedtime is nearing? Knowing that they are on the last one before saying goodnight is often a helpful cue



## Rituals

Do you have bedtime rituals that have to be performed? For example some children need to visit every member of the household for a bedtime hug before they go to their bedrooms, or need to kiss every teddy in their bedroom goodnight. Have you left enough time for this to be done?



## Reassure

Allow time for the inevitable list of worries that children save for the moment that that you are about to leave them. Is there a way that you can broach these before the very last moment? Leave a quiet opportunity to talk earlier in the evening maybe?

### Things to consider...

- Bed and bedroom environment
- Light, ventilation, noise etc
- Bedtime rituals, perhaps a little note you put under the pillow each night
- Waking and worries – consistent caring responses
- Don't think age, think stage when addressing child's needs...they may need toddler bedtime routines when they are much older.





# Bedtime Routine

## Routine

Remember bedtime routines are part of the daily pattern of life. Children like familiar and predictable patterns, then there are no surprises to confuse or upset.



Think about how you build your bedtime routine into your other routines.

## Planning

Have a designated place where you can leave items that are needed when leaving the house. Maybe a box by the front door, or a shelf in the cupboard under the stairs, Some items you may be able to leave in the car ready to go e.g. swimming bag, PE kits, refreshed water bottles etc.



## Organise

Be firm about where school shoes are kept, always have a delegated place for them; no one wants the added stress of not being able to find one black left shoe when you are short on time!

## Patterns

Try to keep to the same times for going to sleep and waking up. This allows for their body clocks to establish a routine without them consciously thinking about it.



## Calm

Whilst for some children bedtime stories are very comforting and aid their transition to sleep, we recognise that for some care experienced children this is not always the case.

## Sleep

Bedtimes stories can be a trigger for less happier times. They can be very personal as they are based on a physical closeness for an adult to read them. What works well in your family? Does your child like to flick through a picture book all by themselves, do they like to listen to an audio book, or maybe a recording of you reading a favourite book?



### Things to consider...

- One late night won't hurt, but this may take a week to recover
- Keep busy points of morning and night as relaxed and calm as possible
- Pre-empt all issues and plan for these
- It is highly likely that you will need to be your child's PA for many years supporting them in managing their organisational skills more independently
- All children can get over tired and have some good and bad nights, just support and nurture

