



Visual timetables for helping to develop positive bedtime routines

As adults, we all know that there are things we can do to help us wind down and switch off at the end of a busy day; it might be taking a bath, reading a favourite book or listening to relaxing music. Some of us have come to learn what works for us, however some of us still need lots of practice; and still others don't get chance to relax because we're too busy trying to get our children off to sleep!

Just as we need opportunity to learn and practice what helps us to wind down and prepare for sleep, so too do our children.

As with other advice and suggestions provided within the **MySleep** guide, our visual timetable has been developed with a focus upon helping to develop bedtime routines for younger children, however the tips we give could apply to anyone. So, once you've mastered them with your child, hopefully you'll get chance to try them for yourself!

Good bedtime routine = good sleeping habits

A structured bedtime routine, that follows a predictable pattern every night, can help your child better prepare for sleep and help them to drop off more easily. If your child can become more comfortable and confident about going to bed alone, they will also be more equipped to put themselves back off to sleep if they wake in the night.

Make it fun

If you can make the routine interesting, you can really help to establish and reinforce the pattern of behaviour, so that your child is much more likely to stick with the plan. It can also make going to bed more fun and less likely that they'll protest.

A better night's sleep always starts with a considered bedtime routine.



Useful tips

Here are some tips for establishing a new bedtime routine...

- ★ Keep the timetable achievable.
- ★ Be mindful of the sleep hygiene rules in the [MySleep](#) guide.
- ★ It's ok to experiment a little at first, to help decide on a plan that works for you and your child.
- ★ When you have a plan, stick with it; consistency is comforting and repetition helps form new habits.
- ★ Keep your child informed of what to expect next in their evening schedule, e.g. "it's nearly time to go upstairs to get your pyjamas on and have a story".
- ★ Save a fun activity for the end of the evening when they're tucked up in bed. This could be their bedtime story, listening to some relaxing music or having a chat about how their day went. This can help motivate them to get through the less interesting jobs they need to do before going to bed. Again, let them know what to expect, e.g. how long it will last and when it's coming to an end.
- ★ Before leaving the room, give your child chance to make any last minute requests, so that they have no excuse to call you back.
- ★ Leaving them with a favourite teddy or maybe a night-light on, can provide comfort and reassurance.
- ★ Mark your departure with a kiss and say "night night". It can also be useful to let them know when you expect to next see them, this might simply be "see you in the morning". Or, if your child is anxious about being left alone, you could reassure them by saying "I'll come back later to check you're asleep".
- ★ Refer to our [MySleep](#) guide for tips on managing nighttime waking.
- ★ Use our [Reward Charts](#), or create one of your own, to mark and reward your child's successes as they make their journey towards successful sleeping habits!



ENERGISE

Sheet 1 contains activities that can be energising and stimulating and are therefore best undertaken late afternoon or early evening so as not to over excite your child.



Take a bike ride



Play electronic games



Play a family board game

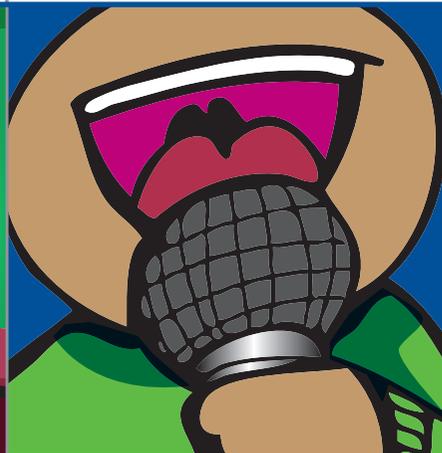


Fold

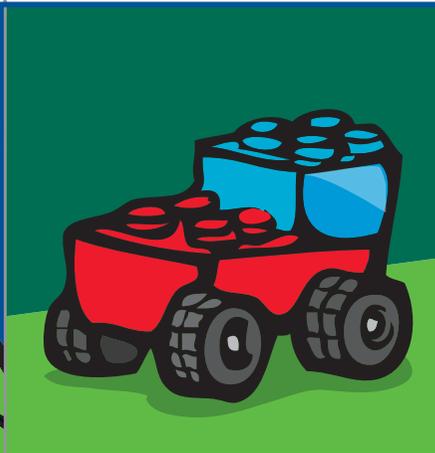
Watch TV



Sing or make music



Play with toys



Play outside or visit a park



Fold



FOCUS

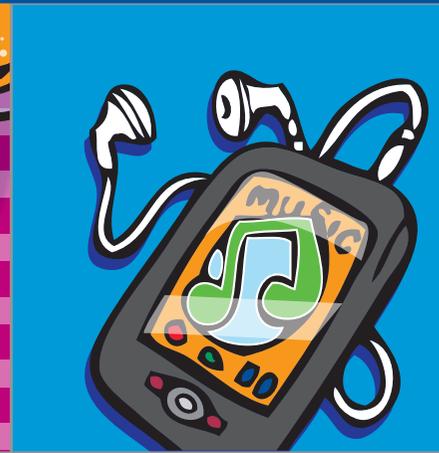
Sheet 2 includes things that you can encourage your child to take responsibility for in the lead up to bedtime and in getting ready for the next day. These activities can help in managing distractions when bedtime arrives.



Eat



Listen to music

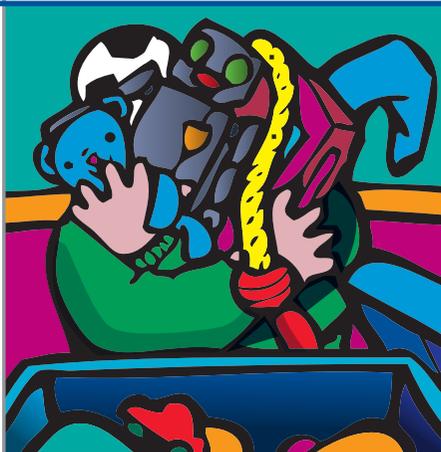


Do homework



Fold

Tidy toys



Pack school bag



Choose next day's clothes



Have a snack



Fold

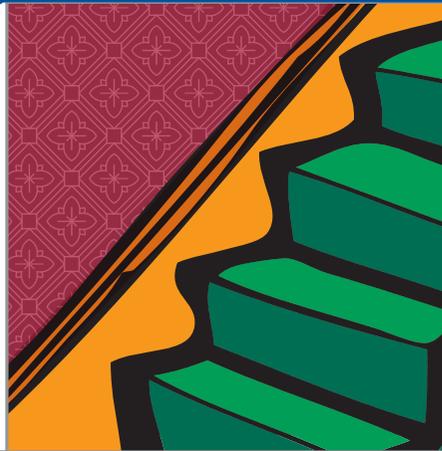


change

Sheet 3 includes actions and activities more focused around bedtime preparations and making the physical transition to the bedroom. They are as much about changing down a gear as they are about a change in environment or clothing.



Go upstairs



Close the curtains



Have a small drink

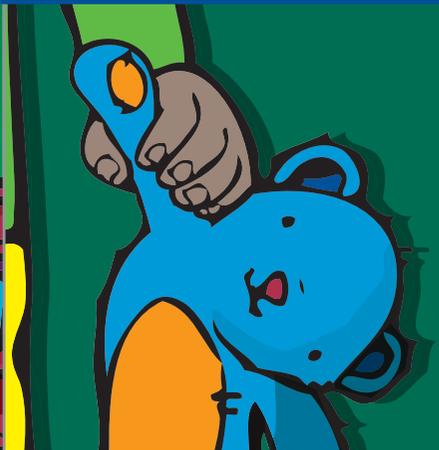


Fold

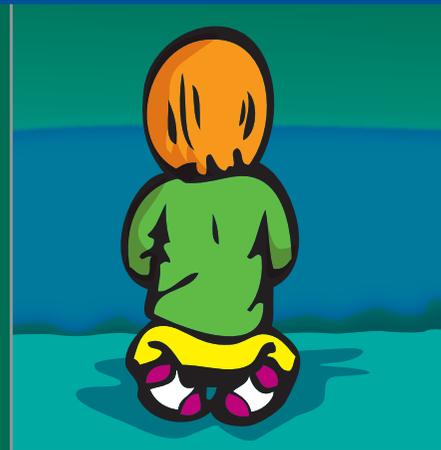
Get changed



Get cuddly toy



Say a prayer



Have a bedtime story



Fold



MY Sloop

CLEANSE

Sheet 4 contains practical things we can do before bed that help free us from that day's residue. Note this sheet also contains 'Have a chat', because opportunity to talk about their day and share any worries can help to settle a child's mind before going to sleep.



Have a chat



Get washed



Brush hair



Fold

Have a bath



Take a shower



Brush teeth



Go to the toilet



Fold



MY Sloop

Switch off

Sheet 5 focus on the final steps to sleep. It includes 'Choose a dream', which is simply about helping to focus your child's mind on something pleasant to comfort and relax them. Whilst ending a timetable with 'Wake up' can help allay some fears around going to sleep.



Read alone



Turn on night-light



Choose a dream



Fold

Kiss and cuddle



Say goodnight



Light out



Wake up



Fold

