



Supporting Children with Bedtime Routines

PREVENTING THE BEHAVIOR

Bedtime routines are an important part of helping young children feel calm, safe, and ready for sleep. Consistent and predictable routines support healthy sleep habits and help children wake up rested and ready for the day.

- **Use first-then language** – “First rest; then I will rub your back.”
- **Use a visual schedule** – Show your child what will happen after bedtime (e.g., seeing you in the morning).
- **Keep routines calm and consistent** – Same steps, same bedtime every night.
- **Prepare ahead of time** – Bathroom, water, and comfort items before lights out.
- **Set clear limits** – For example, 2-3 books only, and stick to expectations.
- **Create a calm sleep space** – Minimal distractions and limited ways to leave the bed.
- **Gradually increase independence** – Rub your child’s back briefly, then slowly move farther away over time.
- **Offer comfort choices** – Let your child pick a stuffed animal or other comfort item.
- **Praise quiet behavior** – Encourage and celebrate when your child rests calmly

HOW TO RESPOND

- **Use first-then reminders** – “First rest or lie down; then I can come rub your back.”
- **Offer comfort item choices** – Allow your child to pick a stuffed animal or similar.
- **Avoid extra attention for non-essential needs** – Only respond to true needs.
- **Return child gently if they get out of bed** – Say good night calmly and leave.
- **Validate feelings** – Your child may be scared or need comfort; acknowledge it and encourage sleep.
- **Consider a night light** – Helps children feel safe if afraid of the dark.

TEACHING NEW SKILLS

- **Teach bedtime expectations** – For example, “First rest quietly; then I will rub your back,” or limits on books or bathroom trips.
- **Teach staying in bed** – Practice lying down until rest or sleep.
- **Teach alternative quiet activities** – Look at a book, rub a stuffed animal, or listen to music.
- **Teach choice-making** – Allow your child to choose a comfort item for bedtime.

REMEMBER

Calm and consistent bedtime routines help children feel secure, get the rest they need, and wake up ready for a new day. Celebrate small successes and enjoy this special time together each evening!

WHAT IS THE PYRAMID MODEL

The Pyramid Model is a framework for supporting the social and emotional development for our children.

