Start early. Begin your bedtime routine about thirty minutes before bedtime. This will help you and your baby to relax and enjoy the winding down process.

Be consistent. Using a consistent soothing style will help your child settle down and get ready to go to sleep. You might try bathing, listening to music, reading a book, feeding, rocking, singing or massaging. Pick a style of soothing that makes you feel comfortable and stick to it. By creating consistent bedtime routines, you teach him how to soothe himself to sleep.

The bottom line: Pick the approach that feels comfortable to you, and be consistent about it.

How do I help my child develop good sleep habits?

Making bedtime a special time can help your child develop good sleep habits. Establishing a consistent bedtime routine can also help your child feel safe and secure. 

Exactly what do you do in the routine is up to you—choose whatever activities make you and your child comfortable—but do it consistently.

Distinguish between day and night

Newborns don’t pay attention to the time of day, they just sleep and eat around the clock. You can start teaching the difference between morning and evening, naptime and bedtime, when your baby is just a few weeks old.

During the day, play with your baby, talk to her, and wake her for feedings. Keep daytime noises at the normal level and keep the house, including your room, sunny and bright.

At night, turn down the lights, noises and conversation when you wind your baby down for sleep. Help your child understand that day is for play and night is to sleep tight.

How do I help my child develop good sleep habits?

The gradual approach

Respond quickly to your child’s protests. However, if you do, you might inadvertently teach your child that a protest will get him what he wants. If this happens too often, it will be hard to make him cry. Although the “cold turkey” approach may seem harsh, it can’t have the most immediate and dramatic effects and will give your child the courage to keep going through sleep patterns.

How should I respond to my one-year-old’s persistent crying when I put him down to sleep or when he wakes up during the night?

Good bedtime practices

Don’t neglect naps. Naps are as critical to healthy cognitive, emotional and physical development as night sleep. Undoubtedly they lead to optimal daytime alertness and can help your child sleep easier at night. As much as possible, try and stick to a consistent nap schedule every day.

Adhere to an early bedtime. Your child may have an easier time falling asleep if she goes to sleep earlier. Before she has a chance to become overtired, and she may sleep later in the morning. Often, moving up a bedtime by just 20 or 30 minutes can make a difference.

Start when your child is young. Healthy sleep is a habit, just like healthy eating habits, which are learned. The sooner you put into practice these rules, the earlier you can teach your child healthy sleeping habits and prevent many common sleeping problems.

Pay attention to signs that your child is growing tired. Putting your child to bed when she first shows signs of becoming tired may help her go to sleep with less fuss or crying. Learn to recognize certain behaviors, which signal that she is becoming tired, such as loss of interest in favorite games and toys and tendencies to become quiet and less active.

How do I help my child develop good sleep habits?

Be sensitive to your child’s sleep needs and establish good sleep habits from the beginning. Deciding how long you should let your child cry requires sensitivity to your child’s needs, persistence and flexibility.