



What to Consider Before You Sleep Train

There are many ways to sleep train your child. **Sleep training** is the process of an adult helping a baby learn to fall asleep and stay asleep through the night, and it is recommended after 4 months of age. Sleep training can and should be adapted to your unique culture, environment, temperament, and needs.

Note: Research shows that there are no significant differences on the parent-child relationship, social-emotional development of the child, parental mood, self-efficacy and sensitivity based on parental sleep training style.

Before you sleep train, there are a few things every family should consider:

1 What your needs are

- Before you start, consider what your needs are and how you might need to adapt these methods. For example, if you are breastfeeding, you can use sleep training after 4 months to promote sleep during all other night wakings, except for those where you would typically feed.

2 Your time

- Some sleep training methods may take longer and require more attention than others. Before choosing a method, consider how much time you have to dedicate to sleep training.

3 Your comfort with your baby's distress

- Sleep training will require you to allow your baby to soothe themselves to sleep, which can frustrate your baby. Some methods will involve more crying than others, which may be upsetting to you. If you share a sleep space, keep in mind that it can be emotionally difficult to be in the same sleep space while not attending to your baby directly.

4 Your baby's temperament

- Some babies may be more difficult to soothe than others. Babies develop “self-soothing” skills at different rates and in different ways, so it can be helpful to consider your baby's temperament when selecting a sleep training method.

5 Your living situation

- If you live in a multi-unit dwelling, such as an apartment or condo, shared housing, or live close to your neighbors, you may need to consider how crying will impact others. It may be helpful to discuss your sleep training plans with those around you.

6 Other factors

- Consider how your culture and values, your work demands, and the schedule of others in the household may affect your decision to sleep train.

Note: Disruptions may occur with illnesses, travel, daylight savings, the addition of a new sibling, household changes, or even naturally occurring developmental changes. It is normal to have to “re-train” your child, but it should be significantly easier and shorter every time.



Sleep Training Methods

The Cry It Out Method

This is the quickest approach but often involves the most crying. Starting and stopping this method can backfire and increase crying, so be prepared to follow through.

- 1 After a bedtime routine, put baby down in crib drowsy but awake without rocking or feeding them to sleep, typically between 6-8pm.
- 2 Leave the room and allow baby to fuss and cry.
- 3 Do not go back in to respond or attend to baby.
- 4 Focus on bedtime and still attend to infants when they wake in the middle of the night to feed, soothe, or change a diaper.

Modified or Adapted Extinction

This is a more gradual version of the cry it out method where parents return to soothe the infant using time intervals and limited interactions.

- 1 After a bedtime routine, put baby down in crib drowsy but awake without rocking or feeding them to sleep, typically between 6-8pm.
- 2 Leave the room and allow baby to fuss and cry.
- 3 Return after 5 minutes to soothe the baby (if possible, without feeding or picking them up). Try stroking their head, rubbing their belly, or light shushing.
- 4 Once baby is calm, but not yet asleep, leave the room again.
- 5 Return and re-soothe at increasing intervals: 10 min, 15 min, and so on.

Camping Out Method

With this method, you will sit close to the crib as the infant is falling asleep and, over time, move further away until they eventually are out of the room. This may take several weeks but often involves less crying.

- 1 After a bedtime routine, put baby down in crib drowsy but awake.
- 2 Sit or lie down near the crib; May soothe or touch but don't offer feeding, rocking, or cuddling them to sleep.
- 3 On subsequent nights, gradually move away from the crib and out of the room.