



A Useful Guide to Restful Nights for Working Parents

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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations! You are looking at the answer to all sleep related baby problems. This is an idiot proof guide to teaching your baby to go to sleep alone and stay asleep all night.

Take care to read the Useful Guide properly (at least once!) before you begin Sleep Training. It is so simple that babies can learn it easily and anyone can do it (it actually *is* idiot proof!).

For simplicity, all the babies in the Useful Guide are referred to as he/him/his but the technique is guaranteed to work on girls too.

If you want your evenings and nights to belong to you again, you need to Sleep Train your baby. If you enjoy getting up in the night and/or sharing your bed with your baby then this Useful Guide is not for you. If you enjoy adult time (and sleep) but constant interruptions from your baby do not allow this, then you have the answers to all your problems right in front of you!

Suzie Poll

1 A Sociable Hour

Every parent can relate to the smug faced tales of “my baby sleeps all night, every night” and equally to the distraught ones of being “up all night again”. Whichever category you fall into, sleep patterns of babies are always a favourite topic of conversation between parents across the whole nation and probably the whole world.

In this easy to learn and follow Useful Guide, we intend to explore the reality of training your child to get himself off to sleep alone and staying that way until at least a sociable hour in the morning.

The technique is as recommended by health professionals and [NHS choices](#). It can be used from the age of six months but works best before the child reaches eighteen months old. If your child is over this age or has any medical problems and/or special needs whatsoever, please refer to your Local Authority Health Team for advice.

To clarify, this technique should only be followed if your child is over six months old and has no health or medical problems. Please see your Doctor or Health Visitor if in doubt.

Firstly, a few points worth mentioning ...

- Babies do NOT fail at this! Parents can fail by not sticking to the rules consistently.
- Babies do NOT need night feeds after the age of six months as this puts extra pressure on their digestive systems which need to rest at night too.
Day time for food – night time for sleep
- Babies’ cries hurt parents NOT babies!

2 To Sleep or Not To Sleep

There are many methods of getting babies to sleep; rocking, feeding, sucking, soothing etc. Some parents lay with their children until they fall asleep, some allow their children to fall asleep on the sofa then creep upstairs quietly to put them into bed. I have even heard of parents slowly beating a drum to help offspring to sleep.

Whatever your method, if you are happy with it and it suits your family, stick with it. If, however, you would rather do something else with your evenings – read on!

The technique itself is more than simple. It's the understanding and the thought behind it that gives parents the *courage* and *confidence* to carry it out *properly*.

I have heard it said (by parents of children that sleep all night, every night) that "you can cope with anything during the day so long as you can get a good night's sleep!" It is certainly true that sleep deprivation is used as a form of torture, yet parents still struggle on during the day – sleep deprived or not!

Young children also need routine sleep patterns to allow them to function to their full ability during their waking hours, just like adults! Sleep is as vital to the human body as air, water or food! Lack of sleep can cause all kinds of problems from irritability and loss of concentration to marital breakdown and despair.

The best news is - help is at hand. There really is a simple solution to this problem. Other good news is that parents who have followed this routine swear by it! More good news: you can expect your child to grasp this concept and actually get himself off to sleep *and* to stay asleep all night within just a few days.

If all parents knew how simple this is, there would be no need for baby sleep clinics anymore! The key to it is *routine* and *consistency*. Once you have started the training the only way to fail is to not follow your routine and not be consistent.

Equally though, if you do follow the simple rules consistently, the only possible outcome is success! The great reward is being able to put your baby down (awake) knowing he will get himself off to sleep and the rest of the night is your own – priceless!

3 The Crying Game

There are however a few days between that and this and therein lies the noisy bit! Crying is a baby's way of alerting you to his need. It works; a baby's cry is always heard! Mother Nature intended it to be that way. Babies cry for food, comfort, warmth and stimulation. Sometimes they cry to release tension and sometimes just because they can!

Listening to your own baby cry is difficult/painful/excruciating which is why, if you have a partner/close friend/willing grandparent, you will need their full support during this training period. If your baby sleeps in your room it may even be advisable for your partner to sleep on the sofa for a night or two. Older siblings should also have this routine explained to them.

4 Setting the Scene

Your baby has to understand there is a difference between day and night. During the day be bubbly and adventurous. Do as much talking, laughing and playing as possible. This will make the difference clearer to baby when at night time everything becomes calmer. Speak in a lower voice, dim the lights, turn music/TV down etc.

If you do not already have a bedtime routine, invent one! Keep it simple (and easy to remember and stick to) e.g. bath, bottle, story. Whatever is comfortable for you and fits in with your family. It's just so your baby can learn that when you do these things bedtime will follow shortly. Also use this time to cuddle, stroke, kiss etc.

Keep things as calm as possible.

5 No Surprises

Babies naturally wake up at times during the night. It is at this point that a baby who has been, for example, rocked or fed to sleep realises he is no longer being rocked/fed and screams until he is rocked/fed back to sleep again! Sound familiar?

This is why it is so important for children to get themselves to sleep (alone) so that when they wake naturally during the night, everything is as it was when they went to sleep (you're not there with them).

Make sure baby's bedroom is as it will be in the middle of the night, i.e. don't put the music/TV on to comfort your baby unless you want to leave them on all night.

Talk softly to your baby while carrying out your bedtime routine. Tell him it's bedtime and time to go to sleep.

DO NOT BE TEMPTED TO START SLEEP TRAINING IF BABY IS ALREADY ASLEEP. YOUR BABY MUST BE AWAKE AT THE START OF TRAINING. IF YOUR BABY IS ASLEEP THIS WILL NOT WORK AND YOU MUST RESTART THE TRAINING TOMORROW.

6 Lights, Blankets, Action!

Remember you have already had your kiss and cuddle time so don't drag out the process of putting baby into the cot. Say goodnight (once!), turn around and walk out remembering to leave the room exactly as it will be in the middle of the night (lights, doors, curtains etc.).

At this point you can expect to hear much screaming from your outraged child (who will be most upset about this change of events!) which is completely normal and for the purposes of this training, good! Naturally your instinct will be to comfort your child immediately. To do this would reinforce your child's belief that they will be scooped straight out of the cot and go back to rocking/breast/bottle as soon as they cry!

This routine, however, is about what you want, not what your baby wants so instead of doing it their way you are going to stay out of baby's room for five whole minutes! This will seem hard at first but so long as you know your baby is safely in the cot you can be reassured that no harm can come to him through crying. Remember, the crying hurts you a whole lot more than it hurts your baby!

You must only start this training if your baby is fit and healthy so you will know that there is nothing medically wrong and the cries are ones of rage not pain!

7 Clock Watching

This may seem like a very long five minutes though so make sure you set an accurate timer so you know exactly how long it has been. Nobody can make these five minutes any easier for you. It is never nice to hear your child cry but as this is a means to an end you must be strong and remember why you are doing it.

Just think of all the undisturbed evenings and nights – forever!

And bear in mind the alternative to listening to the screaming is to go back to what you were doing and never getting any peace and quiet! My guess is though, if you've read this far, you are really fed up of never getting any rest!

If you really can't bear it, try not to listen more than you have to (don't stand outside the bedroom door!). Get as far away within the house as you can! Shut yourself in the kitchen with the washing machine on or try to busy yourself so the time passes more quickly.

Remember your baby is safe in the cot.

8 Check-Mate

After five minutes has passed it is time for your first check. The new routine will come as a bit of a shock to you both at first so the purpose of the checks is to reassure you and your baby.

Checks are kept brief and without eye contact. Your baby needs to know you are still there but does not *need* any further communication from you. Don't forget that kiss and cuddle time has been and gone. This is the time to put your new routine into action – firmly!

So, go back to baby's room. If your child is standing or sitting, lay him back down and cover him up. Tuck in any loose blankets etc. remembering not to speak or gain eye contact. (A good tip for this is to look at your baby's tummy.) You may whisper 'Sshhh' or 'Goodnight' but only say it *once*. To say any more than this would make five minutes of crying worthwhile to your baby as you would be *rewarding* him with communication from you. Do not linger in the room. Do not gain eye contact. Do not change the lighting etc. – the room must be as it is in the middle of the night.

Leave the room at once, as before; your routine must be *consistent*. Remember your baby's screams are ones of rage not pain! Your baby is screaming to get you to do what *he* wants but this routine is about teaching him to do what *you* want. So no standing outside the door torturing yourself!

This time set your timer for ten minutes. Try to keep busy (listen to the radio, phone the talking clock – whatever!), stay strong and remember that if you pick your child up at this point, the technique will fail, your child will feel confused and the time you have already invested in this would be wasted. (Every minute of crying time is one minute closer to reaching your goal!)

After ten minutes have passed it is time for the next check.

Remember the rules: be brief, no eye contact.

This time say nothing to your child. Tuck him in again and come out of the room. Don't spend any more time in the room than it takes to tuck covers in and walk

out. Your baby only needs to know that you're still there. You are teaching him that there is no need for any communication at bedtime – this time is for sleeping only!

Some babies get so enraged they actually vomit in protest! Even if you have to change all the bedding and/or baby during the training, don't worry! It won't delay your progress so long as you stick to the following simple rule: Change the bedding/nappy/vomit covered sleep suit **WITHOUT EYE CONTACT OR SPEAKING!** (Only change a nappy if it is soiled – baby can live with a wet one until the morning.) If you can do all this without bright lighting it would help but don't worry if you can't. The key thing is **NO EYE CONTACT OR COMMUNICATION!**

Leave the room quickly after your ten minute check and set your timer for fifteen minutes. Some children will already get the hint and go to sleep but for the vast majority many screams will still be heard. This is quite normal and to be expected. It's really just a battle of wills! Your baby is trying to get you to do it his way and you are trying to get him to do it your way. Who will win is up to you as *you* are in control!

After fifteen minutes, do another check (be quick – don't gain eye contact – don't speak!). Come out of the room as before (keep the routine *consistent*). If baby is still crying (most are at this point, don't worry) set your timer for another fifteen minutes (no longer). After this fifteen minute period do another check then another fifteen minutes then another check and so on.

Keep to this pattern of brief checks every fifteen minutes until even the most stubborn, head strong, enraged baby will eventually fall asleep on their own!

Your baby will very soon come to realise that it is simply not worth crying for so long only to get a brief check (and no communication) from you.

9 It Could Be You

The same checking routine (5 minutes, 10 minutes, 15 minutes etc.) can be used for night waking if/when needed in the first few nights.

EVERY time you put your baby into bed, day or night, follow this routine.

EVERY time your baby wakes up during sleep time, follow this routine.

If your baby has a sleep during the day this is an ideal time to practise the technique as you will be less tired (and less likely to give in) and it will be less disruptive to others in the house. Any sleep after 3:30pm will have an effect on the night time so keep naps as early in the day as possible.

It really is amazing how quickly babies get the hang of this (if you do it properly!) and the feeling of satisfaction and achievement is unbeatable!

It's so simple that babies can learn it easily and *anyone* can do it.

10 Commitment Phobia

Only you can fail (if you choose to) so, before you start Sleep Training, you must be absolutely sure you want to carry it out and see it through. To only 'half do it' would be painful and pointless for you and confusing and cruel for your child.

If, however, you do commit the cardinal sin of picking up your child after starting this routine you must abandon the training, for now. Don't worry, you can restart it when you feel you want to but leave it for a week or so before you do. You can use this time to psyche yourself up for it and practise your "getting ready for bed" routine.

When you start again, remember why you're doing it, stay strong and go for it! Keep the **Commitment Certificate** (see page 22) somewhere handy to remind you to stay strong.

11 “In My Day...”

It is advisable for the same parent to do the checks as put baby to bed. This should be the person who is most likely to get up in the night (if needed). It's okay for parents to take turns but not in the same night, e.g. Mum does Monday, Dad does Tuesday etc.

For the first week or so it is best for a parent to carry out this training (or the person who is usually responsible for putting baby to bed) but after that time your baby will be such an 'old pro' at getting himself off to sleep that you will be able to employ willing aunts, grandparents etc. to carry it out on your behalf when you fancy a night off!

You must make sure any other carers are aware of and understand this routine as it would be a disaster to perfect it only for a well-meaning relative to put you back to square one! Babies are bound to try it on with new people so be aware of this.

Even if the babysitter/grandparent/disapproving mother-in-law does not agree with it, (“In *my* day you comforted a baby when he cried!” etc.) if they are going to help then they must respect your wishes and follow your routine.

12 Pipe Dreams

Within a week, most children should be getting themselves off to sleep and sleeping all night, every night! Some children (a minority) may take a bit longer but do stick with it – they'll soon learn! If you are *consistent* and *strong* and follow the routine *every* time you want your baby to sleep, it will NOT FAIL!

Your baby will probably be noticeably happier during the day and the whole family will benefit immensely from having uninterrupted sleep every night. Most 'sleep trained' children sleep for 10-12 hours (uninterrupted) every night.

This may seem like a pipe dream if you are currently getting up to see to your baby during the night but it is well within your grasp if you decide that is what you want.

13 Phone a Friend

Get your partner involved so that you can support each other. Tell your neighbours to expect some noise and reassure them that the crying *is* controlled. If they have any concerns, give them your Health Visitor's telephone number – this is the method they recommend and encourage.

Find out if there are any other parents locally in a similar situation. It's great to know there are others in the same boat and you can help and encourage each other while comparing notes!

14 “Unless he’s *what...?*”

Be strong, remember why you’re doing it, stick to the routine religiously and above all *be consistent!*

Bear in mind that there is absolutely no real reason for you to pick your baby up when he is meant to be going to sleep so just don’t!

I once overheard a father (who had successfully completed Sleep Training) telling another father (who was in the process of Sleep Training): “Unless he’s dying – don’t pick him up!” It’s not quite how I would have put it but hopefully you get the idea!

Good Luck!

CONCLUSION

Sleep Training in a Nutshell

Only use this page as a reminder. You must thoroughly read the guide before you start Sleep Training.

- Be lively during the day.
- Be calm at bedtime, put baby into cot.
- After 5 minutes do a brief check.
- After 10 minutes do a brief check.
- Remember cries are of rage not pain!
- After 15 minutes do a brief check.
- Keep 'checking' every 15 minutes until baby is asleep.
- Do this EVERY time you put your baby to bed.
- Tell neighbours and friends what you are doing and why. (Crying *is* controlled!)
- Stay strong – don't give in!
- Stick with it – it's guaranteed to work eventually.
- Be very proud of yourself and enjoy your time off!

COMMITMENT CERTIFICATE

I WANT MY BABY TO GO TO SLEEP ALONE AND NOT WAKE UP UNTIL MORNING.

I THEREFORE AGREE TO: (tick box)

Follow the routine religiously ()

Be consistent ()

NOT pick my baby up during Sleep Training ()

Signed

Date started

Date slept through the night

Feedback

As we are always trying to improve our Useful Guides we would appreciate any feedback you can give us on **A Useful Guide to Restful Nights for Working Parents**. Please click on the link below to access our online feedback form ...

<http://www.pansophix.com/useful-guide-feedback.html>

If we use your feedback to improve **A Useful Guide to Restful Nights for Working Parents** we will email you a copy of the updated version.

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About the Author



Suzie Poll, author of this Useful Guide, lives with her husband and two children near the sea in Suffolk.

She worked in various settings from preschools to management consultancy firms and publishing companies before settling down to a career in motherhood and writing.

When she's not writing or with clients, Suzie enjoys reading, cooking, sea-kayaking and outdoor living.