

sleep guide for kids

Written for Parents and Teachers



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introduction

When it comes to bedtime, we know that going back to school after a holiday (or even a busy weekend) can be challenging.

That's why, we've utilised our sleep expertise to create a Sleep Guide for Kids, written for parents and teachers.

For parents, we'll explain why sleep is so important for kids and share plenty of tips to ensure you make the most out of bedtime.

For teachers, we've included tips to spot the signs of sleep deprivation and what to do about it. We've also included a lesson plan to help you talk to your class about the importance of sleep.

We hope you find it useful!

about



Silentnight is the UK's most trusted sleep brand, backed by 75 years of sleep expertise. Silentnight believes that everyone, everywhere, should get the best out of bedtime.

meet the contributors



Hannah Shore

Hannah is the Sleep Knowledge and Research Manager at Silentnight. Hannah studied biomechanics at the University of Central Lancashire and is studying Sleep Medicine at Oxford University.



Bex Wilson

Bex is the Deputy Head Teacher of the largest primary school in Leeds, in one of the most deprived wards in the city where in 2018 she founded the charity Zarach.



Natalie Costa

Natalie is an award-winning coach, speaker, author and founder of Power Thoughts - a coaching and educational service designed to give children 'power' over their own thoughts!



Zarach is a charity committed to helping children and families who are living in poverty crisis. Zarach deliver beds and basics to children in poverty so that children can Eat, Sleep and Learn.



For more information, visit their website zarach.org or follow them on social media

   @ZarachLeeds

advice for parents

After a break from school, start to implement sleep routine changes a few days or ideally a week before your child returns so it's less of a shock to their system. Here are some exercises to share with your child around bedtimes.

BRING THEM IN

Have a chat with your child about going back to school and what they are looking forward to most, and how to make their sleep environment a cosy one.

- Recognise that sleep is their super power - recharging them for the day ahead and helping their brains to grow and develop.
- Share ideas that will help them to relax before bed - Perhaps they want to light a special candle (an electric candlelight) do a few yoga stretches or colour in to help them feel calm, have a warm bath, or read a story.
- Explore how to create a cosy environment by tidying their bedroom, having a special pillow or blanket or a lamp that illuminates a softer glow etc.

hannah's tip

"Creating the perfect comfortable sleeping environment for your child will help them drift off to sleep more easily. Comfort for a child is ensuring they feel safe and secure within their environment so they can fall asleep."

- Read more on the [Silentnight hub](#)

hannah's tip

"We need a good mixture of all types of sleep to get good sleep quality - REM sleep has links with memory consolidation, emotional processing and learning, and NREM sleep is restorative sleep where toxins are washed from our brains and growth hormones are released."

- Read more on the [Silentnight hub](#)



create a visual timetable

Have some fun whilst you're preparing your child for the changes ahead. Encourage them to create a visual timetable of the different tasks they'll need to follow so that they're ready for bed and their 'super-power-sleep!'

For example: Brushing my teeth, switching on a special light, followed by relaxing yoga stretches and then reading a book.

Have them draw these out on cards of paper and place them in the order they want to follow. Visual reminders work really well for young children as it helps them know what to expect and it's also another way in which they feel involved and a part of the process.



my bottle of Super Powers!

This is a fun and calming activity is one that you can easily incorporate as a part of the bedtime routine.

YOU WILL NEED:

- An empty jam jar filled roughly 3/4 with water
- 10ml of glycerine
- Some eco-friendly glitter



what to do when your child wakes up in the middle of the night?

When children wake up in the early hours of the morning it's never ideal and chances are that you probably find it difficult to nod off again too. If your child finds it hard to go to sleep back in the middle of the night, here are a few things that you can do.

- Read more on the [Silentnight hub](#)

DIRECTIONS:

- Before adding the glitter, explain to your child that their mind is like the jam-jar. It's filled with water but at the moment it's clear and you can see right through the jar. This is what our brain feels like when we're feeling safe and calm.
- Encourage your child to then add some glitter to their jar. This represents their worries, frustrations, nervous or anxious etc.
- Screw the lid on tightly and get them to shake the jar. Explain that this now shows what it feels like in their brain when they feel anxious or overwhelmed. All their thoughts are swirling about, and they can't think straight.
- However, if they place the jar down on a table, practice some deep belly breaths and watch the glitter - it slowly starts to settle, and their anxious thoughts begin to settle too. This is a great visual activity to help calm and soothe those wobbly feelings.

more calming exercises to try

FEELING VISITORS OR CREATING 'FEELING CHARACTERS'

Worries at bedtime is common for many children, so if your child tends to be anxious when going to bed then please know that you're not alone. Spending some time creating 'feeling characters' is a great way to help children open up about their emotions.

- Read more on the [Silentnight hub](#)



advice for teachers



how to talk to children and parents of children who often present as tired in school

Discussing tired children and night-time routines with parents can be a sensitive topic. As teachers, we do not always know the family's current circumstances.

- Let them share what they are comfortable doing so, by mentioning what you have noticed and asking open ended non-leading questions:
'I have noticed you seem tired now, why might this be?'
- Seek first to listen. By creating a safe space, parents are more likely to share:
'I feel like X is quite often tired and this is affecting how well they are getting on in school. Is there any way you think school could help?'
- Further clarifying questions can help too:
'We often support parents struggling with bedtime routines or peaceful sleeping environments. Could this be a factor for your family?'

If teachers or any member of school staff have serious concerns for a child's health, safety or wellbeing they should report it to their Designated Safeguarding Lead in line with their school's policy.

spotting sleep deprivation in children

- Sleepy children tend to speed up rather than slow down! This could present as hyperactive behaviour.
- Reluctance to get out of bed in the morning, presenting as regular lateness or parents reporting children refusing to get up.
- Shortened attention span or visibly falling asleep at the table or on the carpet.
- Poorer hand to eye co-ordination often evident in handwriting and other fine motor skill tasks.
- Reduction in emotional resilience, increased moodiness and irritability.
- Reduced memory recall. Could be unable to recall previously remembered facts or spellings.

*All the above can also be indicators of other educational needs and teachers should discuss any of the above behaviours which persist, with their school SENCO.



TEACHER LESSON PLAN

sleep is my super power!

learning objective

To understand why sleep is important.
By the end of the session pupils will be able to:

- Understand why sleep is important
- Describe bedtime routines that help improve their sleep

introduction

Place a few images on the board of people and animals sleeping. Ask children to discuss a few the suggested questions below, either as a class or in pairs:

- What's do you think is happening in these pictures?
- Why do you think they're sleeping?
- What's the same or different about where they're sleeping?
- What do you think happens when you sleep?
- How do you feel about sleeping or going to bed?

Take time to discuss children's answers and exploring the last question, finding out how children feel about going to bed and what they like / don't like about going to sleep (eg: it's boring; I don't get to stay up late like my brother; I have to stop playing my games; the dark is scary; I don't like being by myself, etc).

main

Explain to children that today they're going to learn something really cool and amazing about their brain which not many people know about.

This 'thing' is so brilliant and it can create BIG changes in how they feel, how they behave and influences nearly all areas of their life! Build up the suspense ..are they ready to find out what it is?

Explain to children that sleep is actually their hidden Super Power! You may not always feel like going to sleep BUT your brain LOVES sleep! Sleep is like re-charging your brain. Explain that just like their iPad or game devices need to be recharged, so does their brain.

ask

What happens when the battery for your device is running low? (I can't play, the games get glitchy, the screen goes black, I lose the level I was playing on, etc).

The same thing happens with your brain too. If you don't get enough sleep your brain also feels 'glitchy'. You feel really tired the next day, maybe you make more mistakes, you feel grumpy and get upset, you can't think properly, you don't enjoy playing your favourite sport, etc.

activity

Let children share a few examples with you and they can draw / write down their suggestions on the activity sheet or on a piece of paper: *"When my brain doesn't get enough sleep I feel.. "*

Next, share more with children about why sleep is like their super power.

When you go to sleep, it helps your brain to grow and get stronger. Sleep is also like a Hoover for your brain, cleaning up and getting rid of all the things it doesn't need, so that you can learn better, remember things easier and have enough energy for the next day!

Share that just like humans, animals need their power sleep too. Explore a few fun facts, such as Brown Bats need 12 - 19 hours of sleep and giraffes sleep for 5 minutes at a time to make sure they stay safe from predators etc.

Now that they know how important sleep is, encourage them to come up with a 'Sleep Power Plan'!

To get your sleep power there are a few things you need to do, to help you feel calm and relaxed. Explain the playing games on devices actually tricks your brain into staying awake so a good idea is to not be on devices before you go to bed. Brainstorm what they could do instead and how they can create an healthy sleep routine, such as reading a book, listening to music, doing calming yoga stretches, having a bath, deep breathing exercises, or listening to their favourite story, cuddling a toy etc.

MINI ACTIVITY:

Once they've shared a few ideas have children draw these onto the activity sheet, or onto a piece of paper. "My Sleep Power Plan".

consolidation

Recap all that was shared and ask a few children to share their ideas with the rest of the class. What's one thing you can begin to do this evening? How will you feel when you use your Sleep Power Plan?

Tell children that they can also quickly shift their mood when they don't feel like going to bed. Instead of saying like, "I have to go to sleep," they can say, "I get to go to sleep so that I can use my Super Powers!"