Sleep hygiene

An Everyday Insight tool
mysleeptoolbox.com

Good nights start in the morning.

Sleep hygiene means the everyday habits and surroundings that make sleep easier or harder. Most happen long before bedtime.



An example day, waking at 7 AM and in bed at 11 PM.

Morning

Get up at the same time every day.
Weekends too, and after a bad night. Get out of bed soon after waking. Your body clock sets itself by when you get up, so sleeping in pushes the next night later.

Get daylight early.
Spend 15 to 30 minutes outside soon after you wake, even if it's cloudy. Morning light sets your body clock.

During the day

Have your last caffeine by early afternoon.
Caffeine masks sleep drive, and the body takes about five hours to clear half of it. Stop about nine hours before bed. It can lighten sleep even when you fall asleep fine. Tea, cola, energy drinks, chocolate, and some pain relievers count.

Skip naps or keep them short.
A nap spends the sleep drive you need at night, so sleep comes harder. If you need one to stay safe, limit it to 20 or 30 minutes before mid-afternoon. Dozing on the couch counts.

Move your body most days.
Regular activity, even a daily walk, goes along with deeper sleep and better mood. If a hard late workout keeps you up, try it earlier.

Keep your day going after a rough night.
Canceling plans or resting all day makes the day about sleep, and going to bed early to catch up means more time lying awake. Stick to your usual day and bedtime as far as you safely can, and don't drive drowsy.

Evening

Avoid alcohol and leave nicotine for earlier.
Alcohol can make you drowsy, but as your body clears it, sleep turns light and broken, and snoring gets worse. Nicotine is a stimulant, and cravings can wake you at night.

Finish dinner at least two to three hours before bed.
Digesting a big meal keeps your body busy when it should be winding down, and lying down on a full stomach can bring heartburn. A light snack is fine if hunger would keep you up. Drink most of your fluids earlier to cut down on trips to the bathroom.

Set worries down early.
Thoughts left unsorted tend to show up once the lights go out. In the early evening, write down what's on your mind, a next step for each, and tomorrow's list. Then close the notebook.

Keep a regular evening routine.
Your body can't switch from busy to asleep all at once. Spend the last 30 to 60 minutes on the same calm steps, such as a small cup of caffeine-free herbal tea, light stretching, reading on paper, a gratitude journal, or a breathing or relaxation exercise. A warm bath or shower an hour or two before bed helps too, since the body cools afterward. In time the routine becomes a cue for sleep.

Dim the lights and put screens away.
Bright light in the evening, including blue-rich light from screens, holds back melatonin, the hormone that signals night, and pushes the body clock later. Dim the lights for the last hour or two, turn off screens for the last hour, and keep the phone out of the bedroom.

Avoid things that wind you up late.
The news, doomscrolling, work email, exciting games, gripping shows, and hard conversations keep your mind racing.

Bedtime and night

Go to bed at a regular time, once you're sleepy.
Aim for a similar bedtime each night, but wait until you're sleepy, with heavy eyelids and a nodding head. Going to bed worn out but alert means lying awake, which links the bed with being awake.

Keep the bed for sleep and sex.
When the bed is also for work, TV, scrolling, and worrying, your body learns to be alert there. Using it only for sleep helps your body relearn that bed means sleep.

If you can't sleep, get up.
After what feels like 20 minutes awake, go to another room, do something quiet and dull in dim light, and go back when you're sleepy. Do the same if you wake in the night, as many times as it takes. Trying harder to sleep usually backfires.

Turn the clock away.
Checking the time wakes you up and starts the math of how much sleep is left, which feeds worry. Set an alarm and turn it away.

The bedroom

Cool	Around 65°F, with bedding to add or kick off.
Dark	Blackout curtains or a mask, and a night light for trips to the bathroom.
Quiet	Earplugs, a fan, or white noise.
Comfortable	A mattress and pillow you like.

Keep it in perspective

Good sleepers can take up to 20 minutes to fall asleep, wake a few times a night, and have the odd bad night. Expecting perfect sleep adds pressure. Give changes a few weeks.

For insomnia that has lasted months, habits alone aren't enough. Ask a doctor or therapist about CBT for insomnia. Doctors recommend it first. See a doctor about loud snoring, gasping in sleep, restless legs, or nodding off while driving, and before trying a sleep aid.

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