



After enough bad nights, the bed itself can start to cue alertness. Some people feel sleepy on the couch and wide awake the moment they lie down. Others sleep better in a hotel than at home. Stimulus control is a set of rules for teaching the bed to mean sleep again.

The rules

- 1 Go to bed only when you're sleepy.**
Sleepy means your eyes are heavy and your head nods, not just tired or worn out.
- 2 Use the bed only for sleep and sex.**
No phone, TV, work, or worrying in bed. Reading in bed is a gray area, and many programs ask you to move it elsewhere at first.
- 3 If you can't sleep, get up, and go back when you're sleepy.**
When you've been awake for what feels like a while, go to another room and do something quiet in dim light. Repeat as often as you need to.
- 4 Get up at the same time every day.**
However the night went, weekends included.
- 5 Avoid napping during the day.**
If you're too sleepy to drive or work safely, a short nap early in the afternoon is the safer choice.

Why they help

Every night spent lying awake in bed pairs the bed with frustration and effort. The rules break that pairing. Each time you get up instead of lying there, the bed is kept for sleep, and the aim is for lying down to go with sleepiness again. The fixed wake time and fewer naps help in a second way. They let sleep drive build through the day.

What to do once you're up

Something calm that you don't mind stopping. A book or magazine, a puzzle, folding laundry, or listening to something quiet. Keep the lights low. Avoid work, bright screens, and anything you'd have trouble putting down. Come back to bed when you're sleepy, and get up again if you need to.

What "a while" means

The rule used to say 15 or 20 minutes. Checking the clock to measure that wakes most people up, so many programs now say to go by feel. If you notice you're frustrated, wide awake, or planning tomorrow, that's the time to get up.

Safety at night

Getting up in the dark can lead to falls, especially for older adults or anyone unsteady at night. Use a night light, keep a clear path, and sit down to wait if you need to. If you care for someone at night, adapt the rules with a health care provider.

My plan for getting up

Where I'll go _____

What I'll do there _____

The time I get up every day _____

