

Getting Good Sleep: Tips and Techniques

A good night's sleep is vital for our mental and physical health. Here are some helpful tips (sleep hygiene) to help you relax, unwind, and fall asleep more easily.

1. Create a Restful Environment

- Keep your bedroom dark, quiet, and cool. Use blackout curtains, eye masks, or earplugs if needed.
- Reduce distractions by keeping devices out of the bedroom or limiting screen time an hour before bed.

2. Establish a Sleep Routine

- Exercise regularly but avoid 3 – 4 hours before bedtime.
- Go to bed & wake up at the same time each day to regulate your body clock.
- Develop calming pre-sleep rituals like reading, journaling, or meditating.

3. Prepare Your Body and Mind

- Avoid caffeine, alcohol, smoking and heavy meals close to bedtime.
 - Engage in relaxing activities like light stretching, breathing exercises, or listening to calming music.
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Techniques to help you fall asleep faster

The Military Sleep Method

This technique was developed to help soldiers fall asleep quickly under stressful conditions. With regular practice relax deeply and fall asleep quickly.

1. Relax Your Face

- Begin by lying on your back in a comfortable position.
- Close your eyes and focus on your facial muscles.
- Loosen your forehead, letting it go completely slack.
- Relax your eyes, cheeks, and jaw, allowing your mouth to open slightly if it feels natural.

2. Relax Your Shoulders and Arms

- Allow your shoulders to drop as if they are sinking into the bed.
- Release any tension in your neck, arms, and finally your hands.
- Imagine your arms becoming heavy and completely at rest.

3. Relax Your Chest and Breathing

- Take a slow, deep breath in, and as you exhale, feel your chest release tension.
- Focus on the natural rhythm of your breathing—let it flow without effort.

4. Relax Your Legs

- Start with your thighs, releasing any tension and letting them sink into the mattress.
- Move to your calves, then your ankles, and finally your feet.
- Imagine your legs growing heavier with each breath out, completely supported by the bed.

5. Clear Your Mind

- Move on to the **Cognitive Shuffle technique** (below) after you've relaxed your muscles in your entire body.
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The Cognitive Shuffle

This method is based on the idea that keeping your brain lightly occupied with harmless, random thoughts can prevent overthinking and promote relaxation.

1. Choose a Starting Word

- Pick a neutral, simple word like “dream.”

2. Think of Words Beginning with the First Letter

- Think of as MANY words as you can that begin with the first letter of the word ‘dream’ which is “D,” such as:
- Dog, drum, dough, dinosaur, daisy, desk, dolphin, dance. Visualise each word as you think of it if you have the ability to form images in your mind.

3. Move to the Next Letter

- Think of words that begin with the next letter in “dream,” which is “R”:
 - Rabbit, river, rainbow, rock, rose, robot, rocket.

4. Continue Through the Word

5. Let Your Mind Wander

- As your brain engages with the task, you'll find it harder to focus on stressful thoughts.
- If you find yourself stuck and unable to think of more words, simply pick a new word and start again, allowing the process to remain light and effortless.

By combining mental focus with a low-pressure activity, the Cognitive Shuffle prevents rumination and creates the mental calm needed for sleep.

For a peaceful bedtime guide, check out this calming **10-minute video from the NHS**: [How to Fall Asleep Faster and Sleep Better](#).