



## Camping Out for Sleep Onset

### What is Camping Out?

- Camping Out is a method of helping children learn to fall asleep on their own. It involves parents gradually removing themselves at bedtime. This approach is supported by research, and sometimes preferred by parents compared to other methods.
- *Pros:*
  - Good for children who have a difficult time going to bed on their own
  - Good alternative to “cry it out” methods when they aren’t a good fit
  - Kids may fall asleep faster after waking due to reassuring parental presence
- *Cons*
  - May not work as quickly as “cry it out” type methods
  - Some children may want to interact with parents if they are present
  - May require more time in the bedroom from parents

### Procedure

- The details of Camping Out may vary depending on where you are starting from, but the general goal of gradually removing yourself while minimally responding to child awakenings. Usually, this process takes about three weeks.
  1. **Place your child in bed when drowsy, patting or rubbing them to fall asleep.** You can also gently speak or sing to them at this time. You may want a chair or mat close to the bed.
  2. **Over the next few days, reduce the physical soothing.** Spend less time patting or rubbing your child each night, continuing to provide vocal soothing.
  3. **Gradually move toward the door.** Once your child is falling asleep with vocal soothing only, move closer and closer to the door.
  4. **Continue brief “check-ins.”** Once you move towards the door, leave the room for short periods, then return to check-in. Use verbal, but not physical cues.
  5. **Space out check-ins.** Gradually extend the time between your check-ins.
  6. **If your child wakes,** use a similar strategy by gradually delaying and reducing your response. Try not to react immediately and instead wait a few minutes. Avoid making eye contact if you can. It may help to act as if you’re asleep.