



Faded Bedtime for Sleep Onset

What is graduated extinction?

- Faded bedtime is a strategy for helping kids fall asleep quickly and independently. It works by changing bedtime to help a child form good sleep habits, then slowly adjusting the bedtime back as desired. This approach is supported by research, and sometimes preferred by parents compared to other methods.
- *Pros:*
 - Good for children who don't seem sleepy at bedtime
 - Often avoids some of the struggle and acting out that come with other methods
 - Allows you to “reboot” bedtime habits
 - Can especially be useful for children with developmental disabilities
- *Cons*
 - It may be hard to find the “perfect” new bedtime, when a child is tired, but not over-tired
 - Total sleep for parents and kids may be temporarily reduced

Why start my child's bedtime later to fall asleep sooner?

- Some kids struggle to fall asleep because they are too active or awake at bedtime
- When children take too long to fall asleep, the association between being in bed and being asleep is weakened. We want to strengthen this association.
- By moving bedtime later to when your child actually becomes sleepy, they are more likely to fall asleep quickly, which creates good sleep habits

Procedure

1. **Determine what time your child usually falls asleep.** It may be useful to track your child's sleep onset for a week to determine an average time.
2. **Set the new bedtime.** Make the new bedtime about 15-30 min after your child usually falls asleep. Make sure to keep your child awake until this time.
3. **Adjust the bedtime routine.** Push back the time you start the nightly bedtime routine, so your child gets in bed at the new bedtime. The routine is very important for this strategy to work. This should be a consistent, gradually ramping down of activity (e.g., bathing, putting on pajamas, brushing teeth, reading stories).
4. **Move bedtime depending on your child falling asleep quickly.** Each night, see how long it takes your child to fall asleep after bedtime. If it is within 15 minutes for two night in a row, “fade” the bedtime 15 minutes earlier the next night. If your child fails to fall asleep within 15 minutes, you can push the bedtime later again.

