



Graduated Extinction for Bedtime and Night Waking

What is graduated extinction?

- Graduated extinction is the practice of letting a child “cry it out” for set timed intervals before returning. 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
 - Allows some flexibility when regular “pure” extinction isn’t a good option
 - Suitable for children who struggle with leaving room or wanting
- *Cons*
 - May to not work as quickly as non-graduated extinction
 - Children may have a strong reaction, called an “extinction burst,” with more crying, calling out, or trying to leave the bedroom. This should improve if you stick with the plan.

Procedure

1. **Maintain regular bedtime routine**, making sure it does not exceed 30 minutes
2. **Describe expectations** of the night to your child: “It is time for you to go to sleep. You need to stay in bed and not cry out. If you cry out, I will not come in.”
3. **Create a plan** for what to do as a parent and tools to give your child in case of an “extinction burst” or increased intensity of cry.
4. **Leave child awake and return to the room after the first interval is up.** Provide brief reassurance with words and touch, then exit again.
5. **Continue to only return after increasing interval with each cry**

How long should I wait each night?

- There is no single set schedule, but the interval should be increased 2-5 minutes each time. You could start with however long you normally wait to go in the room. For example:
 - Night 1: 3 minutes, 5 minutes, 10 minutes, 12 minutes
 - Night 2: 5 minutes, 10 minutes, 12 minutes, 15 minutes
 - Night 3: 10 minutes, 12 minutes, 15 minutes, 17 minutes
 - Night 4: 15 minutes, 17 minutes, 20 minutes, 25 minutes

Prep for Success

To get the most out of sleep intervention, parents should think through all the steps in the process.

What does our nighttime routine look like? – A nighttime routine should be between 20-30 minutes and have 2-3 activities with the last one ending in the bedroom

For my child, we will do the following activities each night:

What will I say to set a clear expectation for my child? It is important your child is aware of your inability to return as well as the expectation to not cry or leave the room.

For my child, it would be best I say:

What Will I do if My Child experiences an “extinction burst”?

If my child whines, cries, or screams I will...

If my child tries to leave the room I will...

What is Going to Be Hard About Doing this Sleep Intervention?

What Will Go Wrong/Be Hard?	What Will I do About That?