

Camping Out: A Gradual Sleep Solution for Babies



Highlights

A gentle method for teaching babies to fall asleep on their own
You stay nearby to reassure your child but avoid physical assistance
Typically takes around 3 weeks to be effective
Helps reduce dependence on rocking or patting
Suitable for babies 6 months and older

In This Article

Gradual sleep training with your presence
Is this method right for your child?
A simple plan to help your baby sleep
How to make this approach work smoothly
How long will it take to see results?
Tools and Assistance

Gradual sleep training with your presence

Camping out is a gentle and gradual method for helping babies learn to fall asleep independently. The approach involves staying close to your baby to

provide comfort and reassurance, but without physically helping them to sleep.

Unlike some methods where the baby is left alone between check-ins (like controlled comforting), camping out keeps you nearby. Your presence helps your baby feel safe as they adjust to falling asleep without direct assistance like rocking or patting.

This technique is typically used with babies aged 6 months or older and can take about three weeks to become effective.

Is this method right for your child?

Camping out is especially helpful for babies who struggle with sleep dependency - needing rocking, patting, or holding to fall asleep. It can also be effective for older children, especially those with anxiety or nighttime fears.

You might consider this method if your child has trouble falling asleep alone or frequently wakes and cries at night, needing your help to return to sleep.

A simple plan to help your baby sleep

Before beginning, establish a calming bedtime routine. Once you're ready, follow these steps:

Place a chair or mattress beside your baby's cot.

At bedtime, lay your baby down and stay with them, gently patting or stroking until they fall asleep.

When they're asleep, quietly leave the room.

If they wake during the night, repeat the same process.

After a few nights, begin gradually reducing your touch. Sit or lie quietly nearby, offering presence without contact. Once your baby adjusts, move your chair or mattress about 50 cm away. Each week, move it a bit further until you're out of the room completely.

How to make this approach work smoothly

Consistency is key. Everyone who helps your baby go to sleep should follow the

same steps.

Keep the environment quiet and dim. Reassure your child with your presence but avoid eye contact or talking - this is rest time, not playtime.

If your baby cries, you can offer gentle patting. If they become very distressed, it's okay to pick them up to calm them. Once calm, return them to the cot and begin again.

How long will it take to see results?

Some babies adjust quickly, while others need more time. Be patient and consistent.

It's normal to see progress followed by setbacks - teething, illness, or changes in routine may disrupt sleep temporarily. Stick with your plan and continue offering the same support.

If you don't see improvement after 3 weeks, it may help to get professional advice.

Tools and Assistance

Sleep routine checklist: A simple guide to help establish a consistent sleep routine for your baby.

Comforting techniques: Tips on how to reassure your baby without picking them up, including patting, shushing, and gentle strokes.

Sleep environment tips: Advice on creating a calm, quiet, and dimly lit environment that promotes sleep.

Gradual transition guide: A step-by-step breakdown for how to move further away from the crib as part of the camping out method.

Tracking tool: A log to monitor your baby's progress and responses to the camping out technique over the three-week period.

Parent support groups: Connecting with other parents who are also using the camping out technique can provide additional guidance and encouragement.