

The Calm Bedtime Wind-Down Checklist

Six gentle steps to shift your child from "wired" to "ready for sleep" — print it, stick it by the bed, and follow the same order each night.

Children can't fully calm their own nervous systems yet — **they borrow yours**. The same calm steps, in the same order, every night, teach a busy little body that it's safe to switch off. Aim for at least 5 nights a week.

- ☐ **1 Dim the lights** · first signal
Switch to warm, low light. Bright overhead light says "it's still daytime" — soft light tells the brain the day is ending.
- ☐ **2 Slow yourself down first**
Lengthen your exhale, drop your voice, unhurry your movements. Your calm is contagious — settle yourself and they follow.
- ☐ **3 Keep the same order** · every night
Predictability is a safety cue. When nothing is a surprise, the body stops bracing and starts relaxing.
- ☐ **4 One gentle landing place**
Swap stimulation for one quiet thing to follow — a calm story or soft audio — instead of searching for one more thing to do.
- ☐ **5 Add slow, safe touch**
A hand on the back, a slow rock, a gentle squeeze. Steady touch releases the day's tension and signals safety without words.
- ☐ **6 Keep screens dark** · ~1 hr before bed
Screen light keeps the brain switched on and suppresses sleep hormones. Screen-dark audio keeps the calm without the light.

If tonight is hard, remember

Your child isn't giving you a hard time — they're having a hard time getting from one gear into the other. You don't have to fix everything tonight. Dim the lights five minutes earlier, slow your own voice, pick one quiet story. The rest follows.

A calmer bedtime can start tonight.

SleepySpell — soft, slow bedtime stories that stay on your phone · sleepyspell.app

Tip: print this and stick it where you'll see it at bedtime — the fridge, the bedroom door, the nightstand.