The 7-Night *Sleep Reset*

One small change each night. Seven nights. Every step backed by a real sleep study, explained in plain English.



Educational only, not medical advice. Healthy-sleep habits, not a treatment.

READ THIS FIRST

One change a night. *Keep the ones that work.*

Each night adds one small habit. You don’t drop the earlier ones: by Night 7 you are running all seven. It takes about five minutes a day to set up, and the tracker on page 10 shows you what changed.

HOW TO USE IT

- Read tonight’s page in the evening. It takes two minutes.
- Do the one action. Tick the box.
- Each morning, fill in one row of the tracker.
- Missed a night? Carry on. Consistency beats perfection.

WHO IT IS FOR

- Healthy adults who want better, steadier sleep.
- People whose sleep slipped: new job, screens, stress, dark winters.
- Sleep experts say adults need **7 or more hours** a night, regularly (Watson et al., 2015).

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE

01	ANCHOR	Pick your wake-up time
02	LIGHT	Go outside before your screen
03	CAFFEINE	Move your last coffee
04	EVENING LIGHT	Dim the house
05	TEMPERATURE	Cool room, warm shower
06	RACING MIND	Park tomorrow on paper
07	BED = SLEEP	The 20-minute rule

EDUCATIONAL ONLY, NOT MEDICAL ADVICE.

This guide shares everyday healthy-sleep habits for education. It does not diagnose, treat or cure any condition and is not a substitute for advice from your doctor. If you have trouble sleeping most nights for weeks, snore loudly, or feel very sleepy in the day, see page 12.

Pick your wake-up time



TONIGHT

Choose one wake-up time you can keep for the next 7 days, weekends included. Set a single alarm for it and put your phone across the room.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Count back at least 7 hours of sleep from that time, plus a little time to fall asleep. That is your target bedtime.
2. Keep the same wake time on Saturday and Sunday. If you need a lie-in, keep it small. A 30-minute buffer is our rule of thumb, not 3 hours.
3. Get up when the alarm rings. One alarm, no snooze chain.

> **MAKE IT EASY**
> A late night does not move the alarm. Wake at the same time anyway; you will be sleepier the next evening, which helps.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Your body has an inner clock that likes routine. Waking at the same time tells it when “morning” is, so sleepiness starts to arrive at about the same time each night.

WHY IT WORKS

20–48%

lower risk of death from any cause in the most regular sleepers

In 60,977 UK adults followed for about 6 years, people with more regular sleep had a 20–48% lower risk of death from any cause, and regularity predicted it better than sleep length. This is a link, not proof.

Windred et al., Sleep, 2024

Honest limit: Mostly older adults (average age 63), observational data.

☐ Done tonight

This habit runs all week

YOUR HABIT STACK TONIGHT

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pick your wake-up time	Go outside before your screen	Move your last coffee	Dim the house	Cool room, warm shower	Park tomorrow on paper	The 20-minute rule

Tomorrow morning: fill in row 1 of the tracker on page 10. Thirty seconds, rough guesses are fine.

EDUCATIONAL ONLY, NOT MEDICAL ADVICE.

Go outside before your screen



TONIGHT

Plan tomorrow's first outdoor minutes. Put your shoes and jacket by the door so stepping outside soon after waking takes no thought.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Within about an hour of waking, get outside: a short walk, a coffee on the step, part of your commute on foot. Ten minutes is a good start.
2. Cloudy days still count. Outdoor light is usually far brighter than the light inside your home.
3. Dark winter mornings? Go out as soon as it is light, or take your walk at lunch. Never look directly at the sun.

> **MAKE IT EASY**
> Pair it with something you already do: the first coffee, the dog, the bus stop.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Light reaching your eyes is the strongest signal that sets your body clock. Bright days and dark evenings keep that clock running on time.

WHY IT WORKS

250 lux

minimum daytime light at eye level recommended by an expert panel

An international expert consensus recommends at least 250 lux (melanopic) at eye level during the day, and no more than 10 lux in the 3 hours before bed.

Brown et al., PLoS Biology, 2022

Honest limit: This is expert consensus on light levels. One bright morning will not reset your clock; it works through daily repetition.

☐ Done tonight

Still running: Night 1

YOUR HABIT STACK TONIGHT

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pick your wake-up time	Go outside before your screen	Move your last coffee	Dim the house	Cool room, warm shower	Park tomorrow on paper	The 20-minute rule

Tomorrow morning: fill in row 2 of the tracker on page 10. Thirty seconds, rough guesses are fine.

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Move your last coffee



TONIGHT

Work out your caffeine cut-off: your bedtime minus 9 hours. Bed at 11 PM means your last coffee is by 2 PM.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Count every source: coffee, black and green tea, cola, energy drinks.
2. Swap the afternoon cup for decaf, herbal tea or sparkling water.
3. Notice how you feel at bedtime. Most people do not feel the caffeine, but it is still working.

> **MAKE IT EASY**
> Keep the ritual, drop the dose: same mug, same break, decaf inside.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Caffeine blocks adenosine, a chemical that builds “sleep pressure” during the day. Your body clears caffeine slowly, so an afternoon coffee can still be active at bedtime.

WHY IT WORKS

1 hour+

less sleep from caffeine taken 6 hours before bed, mostly unnoticed

In a sleep-lab study, a large dose of caffeine taken 6 hours before bed cut sleep by more than an hour, and people barely noticed. Across 24 studies, caffeine cost about 45 minutes of sleep; the authors suggest a regular coffee at least 8.8 hours before bed.

Drake et al., JCSM, 2013; Gardiner et al., Sleep Medicine Reviews, 2023

Honest limit: The lab study had 12 people and a high dose (about 4 cups). Smaller doses affect sleep less.

☐ Done tonight

Still running: Nights 1–2

YOUR HABIT STACK TONIGHT

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pick your wake-up time	Go outside before your screen	Move your last coffee	Dim the house	Cool room, warm shower	Park tomorrow on paper	The 20-minute rule

Tomorrow morning: fill in row 3 of the tracker on page 10. Thirty seconds, rough guesses are fine.

NIGHT 4 OF 7 · EVENING LIGHT

Dim the house



TONIGHT

Two hours before bed, switch from overhead lights to one or two low, warm lamps. Your phone charges outside the bedroom tonight.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Set a “sunset” alarm for 2 hours before bed. When it rings, the big lights go off.
2. Swap the glowing screen for paper: a book, a magazine, a puzzle.
3. If you must use a screen, turn the brightness right down and keep it short.

> **MAKE IT EASY**
> Leave enough light to move around safely, especially on stairs.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

In the evening your brain releases melatonin, its natural “it is night” signal. Bright room light and screen light hold that signal back and push your clock later.

WHY IT WORKS

99%

of people had their melatonin signal delayed by ordinary room light

Ordinary room light before bed delayed the melatonin signal in 99% of people and shortened it by about 90 minutes. In another lab study, reading on a glowing e-reader meant about 10 more minutes to fall asleep and a body clock shifted more than 1.5 hours later, compared with a paper book.

Gooley et al., JCEM, 2011; Chang et al., PNAS, 2015

Honest limit: Both are lab studies with young adults; the e-reader study had 12 people.

☐ Done tonight

Still running: Nights 1–3

YOUR HABIT STACK TONIGHT

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pick your wake-up time	Go outside before your screen	Move your last coffee	Dim the house	Cool room, warm shower	Park tomorrow on paper	The 20-minute rule

Tomorrow morning: fill in row 4 of the tracker on page 10. Thirty seconds, rough guesses are fine.

Cool room, warm shower

TONIGHT

Set the bedroom to about 18–20 °C and take a warm (not hot) shower or bath 1 to 2 hours before bed.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Turn the thermostat down, or open a window, an hour before bed.
2. Shower or bathe for 10 minutes or more, 1 to 2 hours before bed. Test the water: warm, never scalding.
3. Use breathable bedding. Too warm? Let your feet out from under the covers.

> **MAKE IT EASY**
> Move your usual morning shower to the evening for this week and see how it feels.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Your core temperature dips as you fall asleep. A warm shower sends blood to your hands and feet, which then let heat out faster, and a cool room helps that dip.

WHY IT WORKS

1–2 h

before bed: the warm-water window linked with falling asleep faster

A review of 17 studies found warm water (40–42.5 °C) 1 to 2 hours before bed, for as little as 10 minutes, was linked with falling asleep faster. The Sleep Foundation suggests about 18 °C (65 °F) for the bedroom.

Haghayegh et al., Sleep Medicine Reviews, 2019; Sleep Foundation, 2025

Honest limit: Few studies, and the best temperature varies with your bedding and your body.

Safety: Be careful with hot baths if you are pregnant, older, or have a heart or blood-pressure condition.

☐ Done tonight

Still running: Nights 1–4

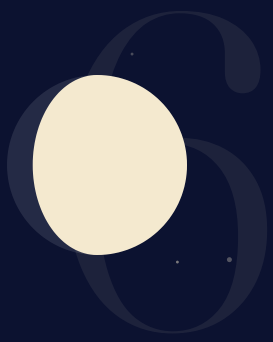
YOUR HABIT STACK TONIGHT

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pick your wake-up time	Go outside before your screen	Move your last coffee	Dim the house	Cool room, warm shower	Park tomorrow on paper	The 20-minute rule

Tomorrow morning: fill in row 5 of the tracker on page 10. Thirty seconds, rough guesses are fine.

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Park tomorrow on paper



TONIGHT

At bedtime, spend 5 minutes writing a to-do list for the next few days. Make it specific.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Keep a notebook and pen by the bed, not your phone.
2. Write tasks, not feelings: “email Sam about the invoice”, not “work stuff”.
3. Close the notebook. Tomorrow-you has it from here.

> **MAKE IT EASY**
> If a new task pops up later, add one line and close the book again.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Unfinished tasks keep your brain on alert when you want it to switch off. Writing them down may “park” them so your mind can let go.

WHY IT WORKS

9 min

faster to fall asleep after writing a specific to-do list

In a sleep lab, 57 young adults who wrote a to-do list fell asleep in 15.8 minutes on average, versus 25.1 minutes for those who wrote about tasks already done. The more specific the list, the faster they fell asleep.

Scullin et al., Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, 2018

Honest limit: One night in a lab with healthy young adults.

☐ Done tonight

Still running: Nights 1–5

YOUR HABIT STACK TONIGHT

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pick your wake-up time	Go outside before your screen	Move your last coffee	Dim the house	Cool room, warm shower	Park tomorrow on paper	The 20-minute rule

Tomorrow morning: fill in row 6 of the tracker on page 10. Thirty seconds, rough guesses are fine.

NIGHT 7 OF 7 · BED = SLEEP

The 20-minute rule

TONIGHT

Lying awake for what feels like 20 minutes, at bedtime or at 3 AM? Get up, go somewhere dim, do something calm, and come back when you feel sleepy.

HOW TO DO IT

1. Do not watch the clock. Turn it away and estimate.
2. Set up your “up” spot now: a chair, a blanket, a paper book, a low lamp.
3. Back to bed only when sleepy. Keep your Night 1 wake time, whatever happened in the night.

> **MAKE IT EASY**
> Waking at 3 AM is common. Don’t reach for your phone to check the time; if sleep doesn’t return, use the same rule. Pick a boring, calm activity: a paper puzzle, a familiar book.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Lying in bed awake and frustrated teaches your brain that bed means being awake. Getting up when you cannot sleep, and using bed for sleep, helps rebuild the link between bed and sleep.

WHY IT WORKS

20 min

awake in bed? Sleep doctors’ advice is to get up

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine’s public advice: if you do not fall asleep after 20 minutes, get out of bed. Its 2021 clinical guideline includes “get out of bed when unable to sleep” and “wake up the same time every morning”.

AASM Sleep Education; Edinger et al., JCSM, 2021

Honest limit: “20 minutes” is a practical rule of thumb, not a tested cut-off.

☐ Done tonight

Still running: Nights 1–6

YOUR HABIT STACK TONIGHT

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pick your wake-up time	Go outside before your screen	Move your last coffee	Dim the house	Cool room, warm shower	Park tomorrow on paper	The 20-minute rule

Tomorrow morning: fill in row 7 of the tracker on page 10. Thirty seconds, rough guesses are fine.

FILL ONE ROW EACH MORNING

Your 7-day *tracker*

Estimate, don’t measure. Checking the clock at night can keep you awake, so write rough numbers in the morning.

NIGHT	INTO BED	WOKE UP	MINS TO FALL ASLEEP (GUESS)	TIMES WOKEN	MORNING ENERGY 1–5	ACTION DONE
1 ANCHOR					○ ○ ○ ○ ○	☐
2 LIGHT					○ ○ ○ ○ ○	☐
3 CAFFEINE					○ ○ ○ ○ ○	☐
4 EVENING LIGHT					○ ○ ○ ○ ○	☐
5 TEMPERATURE					○ ○ ○ ○ ○	☐
6 RACING MIND					○ ○ ○ ○ ○	☐
7 BED = SLEEP					○ ○ ○ ○ ○	☐

NOTES: WHAT MADE THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE?

EDUCATIONAL ONLY, NOT MEDICAL ADVICE.

BONUS

Two quiet *sleep thieves*

THE NIGHTCAP

Alcohol can make you drop off faster, but as your body breaks it down, the second half of the night gets more broken, and dream (REM) sleep is delayed and cut.

Across 27 studies, even about **two standard drinks** disrupted REM sleep.

Ebrahim et al., 2013; Gardiner et al., Sleep Medicine Reviews, 2025

Try: keep any drink small and well before bed. Alcohol is never a sleep aid; if you rely on it to sleep, talk to a doctor.

THE LONG NAP

A short nap gives a boost without sinking into deep sleep. Long naps can leave you groggy and use up the sleep pressure you need at night.

In one study, a **10-minute nap** beat a 30-minute nap for a quick boost, with benefits lasting up to 155 minutes.

Brooks & Lack, Sleep, 2006

Try: if you nap, keep it short and early afternoon. If nights are hard, skip naps this week.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Some nights will still be rough. That's normal. Habits like these work over weeks, not in one night, and the biggest wins usually come from Night 1 (same wake time) and Night 4 (dim evenings). Keep the ones that help, and drop the ones that don't suit your life.

SHIFT WORKERS, NEW PARENTS, CARERS

A fixed wake time may not be possible for you. Keep it as consistent as you can, protect the dark and the cool, and use Nights 3, 6 and 7 freely. They work at any hour.

IMPORTANT

When to *talk to a doctor*

This guide is about everyday habits. Some sleep problems need more than habits, and that is nothing to tough out alone.

SEE A DOCTOR IF…

- You've had trouble falling or staying asleep most nights for several weeks.
- You snore loudly, gasp or stop breathing in your sleep (or someone tells you that you do).
- You feel very sleepy in the day, or nod off while driving or working.
- Your legs feel restless at night, or worry and low mood keep you awake.

WHAT DOCTORS RECOMMEND FOR CHRONIC INSOMNIA

Doctors' guidelines from the American College of Physicians (2016) and the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (2021) recommend **CBT-I** (cognitive behavioural therapy for insomnia), a structured therapy built on sleep habits and thinking patterns, as the first treatment for chronic insomnia in adults.

The same 2021 guideline advises against using basic sleep tips *alone* to treat chronic insomnia. That's why this guide is a starting point for healthy sleep, not a treatment.

EDUCATIONAL ONLY, NOT MEDICAL ADVICE.

Sleep Explain makes educational content. We are not doctors. Nothing here is a diagnosis or a treatment plan. In an emergency, call 911 or your local emergency number.

NEXT STEP

Make the nights *easier*

Habits do the heavy lifting. A few simple tools can make them easier to keep, especially if light, noise or heat is the thing that wakes you.

THE SLEEP EXPLAIN NIGHT KIT

One pick per problem. One honest downside each.

We read the 1–3 star reviews so you don’t have to. Five problems, five picks, and exactly how each one fits the 7 nights.

LIGHT	NOISE	HEAT	WIND-DOWN	WAKE-UP
Sleep mask	Earplugs or white noise	Cooler bedding	Red-lens evening glasses	Sunrise alarm

sleepexplain.pages.dev/night-kit/

KEEP GOING AFTER NIGHT 7

Run all seven habits for one more week, then keep your top three for good. Most people find the same wake time and dim evenings are the two that stick.

WATCH THE SCIENCE

We’re making a short Sleep Explain video for each night, showing the study behind it in under a minute. Follow Sleep Explain to catch them.

REFERENCES

Sources

Every number in this guide comes from the sources below. Study sizes and limits are noted on each night's page.

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