

Tips for a Happy Children's Bedtime Routine

Diane Stortz—Author of *Words to Dream On: Bedtime Bible Stories and Prayers*

Does your children's bedtime routine need a bit of an overhaul? Do you want to create more peaceful bedtimes? Here are some tips that can help.

- **Children like routines and knowing what to expect . . .**
So set a specific bedtime based on your child's age and activities and maintain it each night as much as possible.
- **Avoid energetic or competitive games** as bedtime approaches . . .
So no more wrestling with dad past a certain time. Choose quiet activities instead.
- **Stagger bedtimes if you can . . .**
Let older children have slightly later bedtimes than younger ones. This allows you to spend individual time with each child. Or, if children's bedtimes are the same, alternate which parent tucks in each child.
- **Help your child relax . . .**
Try a warm bath or shower, a good hair brushing, or a foot rub to help your child relax toward sleep. If you offer a bedtime snack, make it sleep inducing, such as a cup of warm milk or cocoa.
- **Give gentle reminders of what happens next . . .**
For example, "Three more minutes, then it's time to get in your pajamas."
- **Take your time . . .**
Don't rush. Take time to talk, read, and pray with your child. Dim the lights and turn off the TV, tablet, and your phone. Listen to some quiet music or sing quiet songs together.
- **Be patient as you make changes . . .**
Be firm but kind as you introduce new ways of doing things. New habits can take time to catch on. **Sweet dreams!**

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