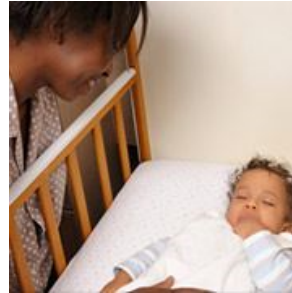


Camping out

Camping out is a gradual and gentle technique to help children over six months of age learn to fall asleep by themselves.

What is camping out?

Camping out is a strategy for dealing with persistent settling and waking problems in babies and young children. It can also be helpful with older children who are having problems getting to sleep, particularly if they feel [anxious](#) or frightened.



The idea behind camping out is to help children learn how to settle themselves to sleep, rather than you feeding, patting or cuddling them to sleep.

Steps for camping out

1. Place a bed or chair next to your baby's cot.
2. Lie or sit next to your baby and pat or stroke baby off to sleep.
3. When your baby is asleep, you can leave the room.
4. When your baby is used to falling asleep like this (usually three nights), sit or lie by the bed until baby falls asleep. Don't touch baby.
5. When your baby is used to falling asleep like this (usually another three nights), move your chair or bed away from the cot a short distance (30-40 cm). Stay in the chair or bed until your baby falls asleep.
6. Move your bed or chair gradually towards the doorway and out of baby's room. This could take a period of 1-3 weeks.
7. If your baby wakes overnight, return to the chair or bed (at the point you are up to with settling). Stay there until baby goes back to sleep.

Important tips for camping out

- When sitting or lying next to your baby, keep things quiet. Do not talk to or play with baby.
- Try to avoid making eye contact while you're settling baby. This tells your baby that play time has finished. It might help to close your own eyes while sitting beside your baby.
- Some babies can get very angry that parents aren't picking them up – but **resist the temptation to pick your baby up**. If you do, you run the risk of reinforcing this habit. Your baby will eventually learn that you are there for comfort, but not for picking up.
- When trying any new settling strategy, **consistency is the key**. The more consistent you are, the faster your baby will learn to fall asleep.

If things haven't improved after two weeks, talk to your doctor or child and family health nurse. They'll be able to help you develop a program tailored to the needs of your child.

Getting support and further help

Camping out isn't the only strategy you can use. For all the information you need on changing your baby's sleep patterns, see our [guide to solving sleep problems](#).



Working with a trusted child health professional can increase your chances of success in solving your baby's sleep problems. You could think about getting this kind of support before you begin using the camping out technique. Read more about [getting help with settling babies](#).



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