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Bedtime Fading

One reason your child may have difficulty falling asleep at night is due to his internal clock. Although you may have tried to have an early bedtime, your child rarely falls asleep before a certain time. *Bedtime fading* matches your child's bedtime with his natural sleep onset time in order to reduce bedtime problems. Once your child learns to fall asleep quickly at the designated time, then you can begin to gradually move his bedtime earlier. The following provides guidance on how to use bedtime fading with your child.

1. **Your child's new bedtime will be _____.** This means you should start his bedtime routine about 30 to 45 minutes before this, at _____.
2. **Your child's wake time on both weekdays and weekend days will be _____.** If he does not wake on his own, you will have to wake him at this time.
3. **In between his previous bedtime and this new bedtime, your child should engage in quiet activities that do not involve electronics.** This can include reading, drawing, or playing with dolls or LEGOs.
4. **After 5 to 7 nights of the child falling asleep quickly (under 30 minutes) and easily, you can begin to move his bedtime earlier by 15 minutes.**
5. **To reach the desired bedtime of _____ you can then move his bedtime earlier by 15 minutes every week** (or after 5 to 7 nights of him falling asleep quickly and easily).

Important Things to Remember

- Your child must have the same bedtime and wake time every night, both during the week and on weekends.
- Although it may seem strange to delay your child's bedtime, he is not really getting any less sleep than he is right now. Your child rarely (if ever) falls asleep before the new set bedtime, and this way he will learn to fall asleep faster at bedtime, reducing bedtime protests and struggles.
- **DO NOT** move his bedtime up too quickly! Gradual changes to bedtimes and wake times are not as noticeable to the body, with children adapting to the new time within about a week. However, rapid changes (e.g., 1 hour at a time) will be very noticeable and will make falling asleep harder for your child.

Some children cannot fall asleep early because of their natural internal clock. Bedtime fading addresses this issue by helping your child learn to fall asleep quickly at a set bedtime. Over time, you will be able to gradually move this bedtime earlier, reducing the bedtime struggles that often result from a child who is simply not tired at the designated bedtime.