

Sleeping Through the Night

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- The "Ferber Method" is generally appropriate starting at 5 months of age, but some go as early as 4 months.
- The purpose of this "graduated extinction" method is for child to fall asleep without parental soothing.
- This approach is not recommended for kids with conditioned fears, extreme reactions, sleep disorders, or behavioral problems.

"Parents who "give in" to their children's demands for attention are reinforcing the problem behaviors. So the solution is for parents to put their children to bed (while they are still awake) and then leave them alone. If kids cry, parents are instructed to ignore it. Parents aren't supposed to check on the child again unless it seems absolutely necessary."

- On the first night of training, parents put their child to bed and then stay away for 3 minutes.
- After a brief check (during which the parents take care not to pick up or hold the child) the parents leave again—this time for 5 minutes.
- Subsequently, parents wait 10 minutes between visits until the child finally falls asleep.
- For each night that follows, parents gradually increase the time between checks. For instance, on the second night, parents might wait 5 minutes before the first visit, 10 minutes before the second, and 12 minutes before all subsequent visits.
- On subsequent nights, these intervals might stretch to 20 minutes or more.

Sleep training is related to less tantrums, less nighttime awakenings, and less parental stress. "If parents can stop or reduce their children's disruptive nighttime behavior, the whole family will benefit."

There are alternative to this method (e.g., extinction with parental presence, positive routine with faded bedtime). For arguments against this method and more information on alternatives go to: parentingscience.com.

* Source: The Ferber method: An evidence-based guide to "cry it out" sleep training, <http://www.parentingscience.com/Ferber-method.htm>