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IS GETTING BABY TO SLEEP  
THE STUFF OF DREAMS?  
THESE STRATEGIES WORKED  
FOR REAL PARENTS.

**B**abies need sleep, and heaven knows, their moms and dads do too! Unfortunately, newborns tend to have their own ideas about when and where to catch their z's. Eventually all new parents will have to answer questions like: Crib or family bed? Nurse him (again) or let him cry it out? Will a certain expert's methods work for my baby?

Here are some real experiences from parents who have wrestled with these very issues—and devised their own solutions, based on their styles, which vary. After all, each baby is unique—just like her parents. Find out what might work for you.

### Baby-Centered Approach

**The premise:** Baby is best off when he's physically close to Mom and knows she's there to meet his needs. Parents who take this course tend to feed the baby on demand (whenever he cries) and co-sleep with him, either in a family bed or in an attachment to their bed. They focus on making the bed a positive, natural place where Mom can quickly offer food or comfort. Experts like William and Martha Sears and groups like La Leche League base their parenting advice on this idea.

All parents more or less start out



& GOOD NIGHT  
& GOOD LUCK

SLEEP SIGN: CAROLINE HWANG

**"If she fusses, I'll do a side-lying feeding, and then we'll both fall right back to sleep."**

with a variation of the baby-centered approach, because a brand-new infant needs continuous nourishment (every few hours throughout the day and night). At the 3-month mark, though, most babies are able to last for longer stretches at night (often up to five or six hours) without a feeding. While some parents use techniques to encourage longer stretches of night sleeping, those who favor the baby-centered approach generally prefer to let this happen naturally.

**Who it's worked for:** For Shannon and Duncan MacLeod, of Seattle, the co-sleeping approach worked well for their first daughter, Evie, 3. Now they're using it again with baby number two. Three-month-old Piper is breastfed on demand and sleeps in a bassinet attached to their bed. Since Mom and Dad tend to turn in around 9 p.m., this has evolved into Piper's natural time to fall asleep. On nights when her parents

years transitioned to a toddler bed.)

The MacLeods' laid-back approach applies to daytime napping too. Wherever Shannon is, Piper simply dozes near her—either in the co-sleeping bassinet, her bouncy seat, or Mom's arms. This way, Shannon doesn't feel they're restricted to a certain room at certain times of the day. "We're just not into rigid schedules," she says.

Shannon hasn't struggled over sleep

**Baby-centered parents focus on making the bed a positive place where Mom can offer food or comfort.**

head to bed later than 9, Piper either willingly goes down first (in her bassinet) or sleeps in her mom's arms until Shannon is ready to retire.

Like many babies her age, Piper does not stay asleep all night. Every few hours "she'll fuss, and I'll do a side-lying feeding," says Shannon. "And then we'll both fall right back to sleep." She doesn't expect this pattern to end any time soon, nor is she anxious about it. "We aren't even considering [sleeping through the night] as a milestone," she says. (Big sister Evie began sleeping through on her own around the 1-year mark, and after two

issues with either baby. But she admits that she's not sure exactly why. "We don't know which came first," she says. "Was it our mellow parenting or our mellow babies?"

If you ask Bev and Todd Lacy, of New York City, it's mellow parenting that makes the difference. Left alone in his crib, their colicky newborn, Daniel, would cry continually. "He would only sleep if he was next to me," says Bev. Although they hadn't planned on it, theirs became a "family bed."

Now Bev extols the benefits of co-sleeping, especially after getting

affirmation from *The Baby Book* (Little, Brown & Company, 2003) by William and Martha Sears. "Nighttime was hard for Daniel," Bev says. "The Sears's approach makes sense to me: If you build a trust when your child is really little, he'll be more likely to become independent later on." So Bev provided her anxious infant with the extra comfort of having Mom close at night. He has slept in bed with his parents ever since.

Like Shannon, Bev breastfed her baby whenever he awoke—usually every few hours. He continued to wake up throughout the night for feedings until he was 5 or 6 months old. Now, at 17 months, Daniel still wakes up once a night, around 4 a.m., to breastfeed. "Some days I don't mind," she says. "And some days I think, 'Darn it, do you really need to eat right now?'"

But she points out an added benefit of their shared bed. "Because our sleep cycles got matched up, I wake up just before he makes a sound and feed him," she says. "Unlike mothers who have to get their babies in the next room, I've never had to deal with crying for 20 minutes to settle the baby down."

And that's not to mention the sweetest perk. "Every morning when Daniel wakes up, he looks at me and says, 'Hi.' Then he says, 'Hi, Daddy!' Then he looks for the cat. It's like he's doing a roll call. It's so cute," she says.

## A Scheduled Approach

**The premise:** Scheduling one's baby usually means getting her into an eating/waking/sleeping routine. The idea is to help stabilize her hunger patterns, which helps to organize her sleep cycles

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What is your sleep solution? Share your thoughts on the message boards.



**“Don’t be a slave to the schedule—it’s a mistake that causes many schedulers to give up.”**

(and get her to sleep at night as the rest of us do). During the first eight weeks, the baby is usually fed every two and a half to three hours, around the clock. During the next eight weeks, Mom will keep up the routine but gradually reduce the number of nighttime feedings (by letting the baby cry it out at certain times).

A baby’s ability to last longer between feedings obviously helps in the process of learning to sleep through the night. So scheduled parents tend to work hard at making sure the baby has a full feeding at appointed mealtimes—and they discourage her from “snacking” on breast or bottle whenever she likes. Sleep experts like Gary Ezzo (*On Becoming Babywise*, Parentwise Solutions, 2001), Gina Ford (*The Contented Little Baby Book*, Penguin, 2001) and Tracy Hogg (*Secrets of the Baby Whisperer*, Random House, 2002) have popularized the scheduling technique.

**Who it’s worked for:** Sarah and Giles Colwell followed Ford’s book, and Sarah admits she endured some teasing

at her mothers’ group because of it. Frankly, she understood the skepticism. “Scheduling your baby is hard,” she says. “Sometimes it goes against everything you think you should do as a parent.” But six months later, when Joe was consistently sleeping from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m., the mothers’ group ribbings turned into pleas for advice.

Sarah copied Ford’s weekly routines for feeding, napping, and bedtime, and pinned them to the refrigerator in her Montclair, New Jersey, home. The routines began with a consistent 7 a.m. wake-up for Joe’s first feeding. In the beginning, the schedules reflected a timetable of eating about every three hours. For example, at 2 to 4 weeks old, baby gets fed at 7 a.m., 10 a.m., 2 p.m., 5 p.m., 6:15 p.m. (what is known as a cluster feeding), and 10:30 p.m. Baby’s naptimes are 8:30/9 a.m. to 10 a.m., 12 p.m. to 2 p.m., and 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. As time progresses, the feeding and naptimes are slightly different, based on the baby’s age and development at each given week.

Of course, Joe’s a child, not a robot. Sometimes he would wake and cry before his scheduled feeding. On these occasions, Sarah reasoned that he had

## Real Moms’ Sleep Solutions

**THESE TIPS MAY BUCK EXPERTS’ ADVICE, BUT THEY’VE WORKED FOR MOMS WHO’VE BEEN THERE.**

“I kept a CD player with a mellow CD in the nursery for my first two kids; my third didn’t need it. When my oldest had colic, my husband would put on a certain Jackson Browne song that always melted him out.” *Sue Turner, New Providence, NJ*

“I would only allow my baby to sleep in the crib at night. He took all of his daytime naps in the playpen. When he was put in his crib, he had just one association with it: nighttime sleep.” *Kelly Litford, Cleveland, OH*

“For a while my son would only fall asleep in his car seat. Then he liked falling asleep on me. I don’t mind at all. He won’t be a baby forever, and I’m cherishing these times when he wants to be close.”

*Megan Callahan, San Francisco, CA*

“We tried everything to get our 1-year-old son to sleep through the night but to no avail. As he was asking to breastfeed all the time, I slowly came to realize he needed more food! Obvious. I gave him lots more solid food and then tried the cry-it-out approach. He slept all the way through the third night! Heaven. I already look one year younger, after the ten I aged during this time.” *Carol Tatham Smith, New York City, NY*

“We have always had room-darkening shades and a white-noise machine in the nursery.” *Wendy Siemen, Livingston, NJ*

not gotten enough food during the previous feeding, and she would feed him a little earlier than the schedule suggested. But she’d also make extra-sure he was satisfied at the next meal.

This was more difficult than it sounds. If Joe fell asleep mid-feeding, she’d have to wake him up to finish. “At first, it wasn’t easy to keep him awake at mealtimes,” she admits. But she soon realized that this practice was worth it; Joe did indeed begin to last longer between feedings.

**“With scheduling, the idea is to stabilize hunger patterns, which helps to organize sleep patterns.”**

The schedules also called for a strict 7 p.m. bedtime in the baby's own room. This wasn't always easy to implement, either, and Sarah found herself seeking advice outside of Ford's book. "Some nights Joe would have gas," she says. "Then we'd use methods from [Harvey Karp's] *The Happiest Baby on the Block*, like rocking him and making 'shh' sounds." She also swaddled him for the first four

**"We began putting the baby to bed while he was still awake and refrained from picking him up every time he cried."**

months—another popular tip for encouraging sleep.

But it was the routine, Sarah says, that made her baby such a good sleeper. Once she made sure she was feeding him enough at each meal, "Joe was rarely hungry or overtired." And after putting him down at 7 p.m., Sarah and Giles had their evenings free for each other.

"People have said to me that I'm lucky and that my baby is easy," she says. "But my sister didn't schedule her first baby and then scheduled the second. The first was a nightmare to put to sleep, while the second quickly learned to sleep by herself. My sister is like a different person now!"

Not all schedulers are type A sorts, either. Anna and Dave Marsh, of Ontario, Canada, challenge that idea. "In many ways, I'm an organized person," Anna says. She has to be when it comes to feeding and homeschooling their four children. "But I'm also quite laid back," she says. "We're never bound to a schedule in any area of life."

Ironically, she says this flexibility is what made her a perfect candidate for the scheduling techniques based on

those in the book *Secrets of the Baby Whisperer*. Anna agrees with the book's main idea: By imposing a rhythmic structure to eating and sleeping, a parent can help regulate the baby's sleep patterns. So during the first eight weeks, Anna followed the book's three-hour eat/wake/sleep routine. In later weeks, she made the suggested adjustments to



the patterns (like dropping certain night feedings) to encourage longer stretches of nighttime sleep.

But Anna wasn't a slave to the schedule, either—a mistake that causes many would-be schedulers to give up (and leads detractors to label the practice as dangerous). For example, she wasn't afraid to stray from the routine if baby was crying from hunger. She also eschewed the suggestion made by certain scheduling experts to start the day at the same time each morning. And she ignored advice to make the baby

sleep in his own room. Each of her babies slept in a Moses basket on the floor of her and Dave's room.

## A Self-Soothing Approach

**The premise:** Everyone wakes up from time to time during the night. Most of us fall right back to sleep, but this is a skill that infants need to learn, say proponents of the self-soothing technique. So starting when the baby is about 6 weeks old, they begin teaching him to fall asleep without Mom's help. Mom or Dad begins putting baby to bed while he's still awake and refrains from picking him up every time he cries at night.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) endorses this approach, and the sleep expert Richard Ferber (*Solve Your Child's Sleep Problems*, Simon & Schuster, 2006) uses it as the basis for his own methods (starting when the baby is 6 months), which are slightly stricter than the AAP's.

**Who it's worked for:** Nan and Raoul Gonzalez's son, Conrad, was around 8 months when they began to implement these ideas. But

this Scottsdale couple swears by the tips they gleaned from Dr. Ferber's book. When they began, Conrad, who was bottle-fed, had gotten used to falling asleep in Mom's arms during his last feeding. He was also still waking up twice over the course of the night. Nan felt that these wee-hour feedings were more about comfort than food. She was determined to break him of these poor sleep habits.

"First, I got serious about a consistent bedtime routine—one that didn't involve Conrad falling asleep while

**"After around eight or nine nights, he finally stopped fighting me on the bedtime routine."**



**"A baby who gets a good night's sleep will be a lot happier than one who doesn't (Mom also benefits)."**

drinking his bottle," she says. At 5:30 p.m., she fed him his dinner (baby food and a small bottle of formula). At 7:15 p.m., she gave him his last bottle for the day. Then came a bath, a bedtime story, and a time of rocking him in his dimly lit room. At 8 p.m., she put him in his crib for the night.

"Of course, he looked at me like I was crazy," she says, laughing. "Then he started wailing." On the first few nights, Nan slipped out of Conrad's room and let him cry for three minutes. Then she went in, picked him up, and rocked him for a long time. As he dozed off, she put him down again. At this point, Nan was focused on getting Conrad used to falling asleep without a bottle.

Her next goal was getting him to fall asleep without her. When she put Conrad down at 8 p.m., he always cried

Fifteen minutes, then comfort him. Finally, he was so tucked out, he fell asleep."

Nan went through this same routine again when Conrad awoke in the middle of the night. "Yes, I was exhausted!" she says. In fact, after following the same pattern every night for more than a week, she didn't think she'd be able to keep it up. Luckily she didn't have to.

"After eight or nine nights, he finally got it," she says. "He got used to the bedtime routine, and he stopped fighting me on it. And his middle-of-the-night crying dramatically decreased."

Over in Motherwell, Scotland, Linda and David Allen took a more personal—and much less structured—approach to Ferberizing their children, Chloe, 11, Jacob, 9, Mitchell, 6, and Elspeth, 4. The couple agreed with Ferber's theory that every baby noise is not a cry for food and that crying for a little bit might be necessary for the baby to learn to sleep alone. But timing the baby's crying spells

it was just a little fussing, I didn't hear it." Instead of making three or four trips to baby's room, Linda found herself making only one and sometimes none. For three of her four babies, going sans-monitor was a blessing; they did indeed learn to put themselves back to sleep.

But Linda is careful to let other moms know it's not right for every baby. "My third was often sick and uncomfortable, so I didn't apply the same toughness," she says. "He screamed relentlessly no matter what I did, and it was years before he slept through the night."

It may take some trial and error, but stick with it and you'll find the technique that works for you and baby.

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**"If you build a trust when your child is little, he will be more likely to become independent later on."**

when she left. "I started by waiting five minutes outside his room," she says. Then, shunning Ferber's advice, she went in, briefly held him (to calm him down), put him back in his crib, and patted his back for a minute or two. Then she left the room.

But Conrad just wasn't on board. Sensing his mom had left, he began to cry again. This time, Nan waited outside his room for ten minutes, then went in to comfort him. Again, he cried when she left. Nan upped the waiting time to 15 minutes before going back in. "This went on for an hour," she says. "I'd wait 15 minutes, then comfort him.

wasn't their style. "David didn't want to hear the baby crying," Linda says. And she wasn't keen on standing outside the nursery with a stopwatch.

So when should she pick up the baby, and when should she let him resettle himself? Linda handled this problem in her own, unscientific way: When her babies reached 6 weeks, she took the baby monitor out of her bedroom. From that point on, if the baby was crying loud enough for her to hear all the way down the hall, she'd go in and breastfeed him.

"But I only heard the babies' cries if they were really wailing," she says. "If

## The Ferber Method: New & Improved?

In April, Richard Ferber, MD, reissued his landmark 1986 book, *Solve Your Child's Sleep Problems* (Simon & Schuster). While rumors swirled that he had altered his position drastically, a perusal of the book indicates that the hoopla surrounding its purported landmark changes may have been sensationalistic.

However, the updated version does espouse a few important variations. For example, he concedes that his method is not right for all babies. And he is more permissive of the family bed approach—a practice he cautioned against in his first book.

You also will find new information on such topics as schedules and timing, limit setting (when children want "just one more book" or "one more video"), napping, co-sleeping, night terrors, and SIDS.