



Nap Guide

Baby Self Settling for Naps + Re-settling

4-12 month olds



Sleep

is a biological necessity,
not a luxury



Contents

- **Baby Nap Info.**
- **Benefits of naps.**
- **How much sleep?**
- **Consolidating the cat naps**
- **Days vs Nights**
- **Making naps easier**
- **Routines**
- **Staggered approach**
- **Staggered re-settling**
- **Understanding sleep cycles**
- **3-4 month routine**
- **5-6 month routine**
- **7-8 month routine**
- **9-12 month routine**
- **Teach self settling**
- **Start with awake flow chart**
- **Trouble shooting self settling**
- **7 days to longer naps program**
- **Awake windows**

Baby Nap Info

A look at naps from newborn to toddlers, and what you need to know and understand.

As parents, we know we need them - and we're fairly sure our children do too, although they sometimes take a bit of convincing.

And then there are all the misconceptions and comparisons - who is having what amount of sleep, who is catnapping, and how you deal.

So here I thought I'd put together my most comprehensive guide to baby and toddler naps.

Benefits of a bit of day time sleep

In some ways, I imagine you don't need me to spell these out to you - you're well aware of them.

Nap-time is your sacred time out and, while you're at home with really small humans, is often the time that you eat, shower, and catch up on life admin.

Or just rest sometimes, I hope.

Either way, it's the time out that you need to regulate your emotions.

It's not a large leap then to understand that naps are also helping with that for your child.

Children who nap are happier and more capable of dealing with stress (i.e. less likely to have meltdowns).

As well as regulating their emotions, healthy, age-appropriate naps also help to regulate your child's appetite, so they will feed better during their awake times.

Not only that, studies have found that naps also play an important facilitatory role in memory consolidation, as well as language development.

In fact, it is a child's day-time sleep (not what they're doing overnight) that most strongly correlates with language development.

I believe it is likely that these two effects are linked - and better naps lead to the consolidation of all the language input children receive during the day (which they're not getting through the night!)



So how many naps does my child need?

How long should they be sleeping during the day?

As you might imagine, this completely depends on their age - so let's take a look.

Newborns (0-4m) - Our tiniest wee humans need between 3 and 5 naps, and ideally should be spending 4 to 6 hours of their daytime asleep.

4-12 months - In this period, there's a big change in the number of naps, with children transitioning from 4 naps, down to 3, and then to 2 (this final drop happens, on average, between 6-8 months).

During this time, a child's total time spent day sleeping will reduce to somewhere between 2.5 - 3.5 hours.

This means that parents need to increase awake times dramatically to ensure their wee ones are tired enough to sleep well at naptime.

Key to survival here is understanding how long your child can (and should!) manage to stay awake in one stretch.

The other thing to note during this time is that Dr Weissbluth says that 'motion naps' - those taken in the front pack, stroller, or car - become less restorative.

For this reason, we recommend that at least one nap a day is done at home, or at least in a stationary space, like a cot.

12 - 24 months - During this time a child's daytime sleep needs reduce to 1.5 - 2.5 hours.

From here, until a child turns three, things become way more variable.

Most children move from 2 naps to just 1 between the 15-18 month mark, and the majority of children (but not all!) drop this final nap before they turn 3.

All children are different, however children who don't nap well - either because they're catnapping or aren't having the right sort of daytime sleep for their age and stage - may start to find their night sleeps are impacted.

If you suspect your child's naps are interfering with their night sleeping, don't be afraid to talk to your child's preschool and make some changes.

Consolidating the cat napping

Catnapping typically emerges around the 8-18 week mark and, far from your child's sleep being broken, it's a completely normal developmental stage that occurs as their biological sleep cycles emerge.

However, the research points to the fact that as babies get older, shorter naps are not as restorative as longer stretches, so it is important to help your child resettle and consolidate their catnaps.



Settling: When day and night are different, As well...day and night.

We're often asked about why babies are so much easier to settle and resettle at night-time, while daytime naps remain a battle.

There's a scientific reason for this.

Our baby's physiological drive to sleep is felt more acutely at night-time (as is ours, in theory!)

Daytime sleep is important, but their body won't be hanging out for it in the same way.

When it comes to settling techniques, newborns often respond well to hands-on settling techniques, while older children find these methods frustrating (especially at nap-times!) and need time and space to settle.

To us, sleep is sleep, so apart from the bath, do everything else in the same way that you would for their night sleep for each of their naps. This is a pre sleep ritual and can help with both settling and re-settling.

The same conditions will indicate to them that it's time to sleep.



Some things which make naps easier

- **Pre-sleep rituals:** As mentioned above, having some calm and consistent things that you do before bedtime is important. Whether it be reading a book, singing a favourite song, or having a snuggle, implement your little routine before every sleep; day or night.
- **Positive sleep associations:** In the same way that you want to be consistent in the little things you do in the lead-up to sleep, keep their other conditions the same. If they are swaddled or wear a sleep sack overnight, do this for their naps too.
- **A quiet and calm environment:** Avoid too much stimulation and interactive stuff in the room as you are getting your child ready for sleep.

- **Consistent settling approach:** You're probably already getting the idea that consistency is key but never more so than in your settling methods. Don't try a bunch of different techniques each time - pick what you want to try and stick to it.
- **Consistent timing:** Keeping naps around the same time each day is important - not as a routine necessarily (if that really doesn't appeal to you!) but instead as a way to work in with your baby's natural circadian rhythms and allow their body clock to settle.
- **Avoiding overtiredness:** Understanding the need for regular naps means that you can recognise and respect the signs of overtiredness, working around your baby's needs.

- **Naps not following straight after food or milk:** We often assume our baby should go down straight after they're fed to get the longest possible stretch before they're hungry (and hence, awake!) again. However, for some children this can cause or exacerbate reflux and digestive issues. Ideally wait 20 minutes to an hour after food before you put your child down to sleep.



Nap routines

Starting naps at consistent times, and working on re-settling at least once a day will help prevent or fix cat naps.

These nap routines are more fundamental than my full routines because we are just focusing on settling and re-settling.

I recommend you allow the first nap to just be 1 sleep cycle and focus on the second nap of the day being the one you teach your baby to re-settle into.

If your baby is not re-settling at lunch time and is tired before 4pm, only offer a 10 minute nap before 4pm, as a longer nap will continue to encourage the lunch nap to be short.

Staggered approach

If you currently help your baby to get to sleep for their naps and you want to stop you can stagger your approach.

Option 1: Work on independent settling for nap 1 only, keep helping your baby to nap for naps 2 and 3.

Option 2: Continue to help your baby to sleep for the first and third nap and work on independent settling for nap 2 only.

Give it a week and work on the other nap. Always leave the 3rd nap as one you help your baby to sleep for.

Staggered re-settling

When it comes to re-settling, you can stagger this too.

Option 1: Work on independent settling and re-settling at the same time.

Option 2: Work on independent settling for a week or 2, then work on re-settling when you feel the settling at the start of the nap is easy and independent of you.

Understand sleep cycles

Your baby naps in sleep cycles that are
30-45 minutes.

These sleep cycles are normal.

Our aim is to teach him/her to settle independently at the start of the nap, so after a sleep cycle they can go back to sleep.

Baby's Night Time Sleep Cycles



3-4 month routine

7.00am

Start of day

8.45am

Nap 1

11.45am

Nap 2

4.15pm

Nap 3

6.30pm

Bed time

4-6 month routine

7.00am

Start of day

9/9.30am

Nap 1

12/12.30pm

Nap 2

4.30pm

Nap 3

6.40pm

Bed time

6-8 month routine

7.00am

Start of day

9.30am

Nap 1

12.30pm

Nap 2

4.45pm

Nap 3

6.45pm

Bed time

9-12 month routine

7.00am

Start of day

9.45am

Nap 1

12.45pm

Nap 2

No third nap

7pm

Bed time

Ready to teach self settling?

Self Settling is the way we describe a baby who can settle to sleep from awake without your help. Without being patted to sleep, held to sleep, fed to sleep or anything else we do to help our newborns fall asleep.

To teach this we are going to start with a pre-nap wind down that takes 10-15 minutes.

Before their nap, move to a sleep space and pull the curtains, pop them in their sleeping bag, have quiet cuddles, read a book, or sing a song. Help prepare them for sleep.



Put your baby down awake.

Leave the room or sit by the cot for 3 minutes.

If you're comfortable with longer that's ok too!

If they're not crying up, wait until they do for 30 seconds.

Listen carefully, is your baby just grizzly?

If crying up, rub or pat baby's back, or, hand on chest.

Use a big cuddle to soothe when needed.

Shush and re-assure baby if upset.

Give baby another 3 minutes. Either leave, or sit by the cot.

If your baby sits or stands, lie them down.

If they're not crying up, wait until they do for 30 seconds.

If crying up, rub or pat baby's back, or, hand on chest.

Repeat the cycle.

Trouble shooting the above...

What if my baby has a dummy?

If they're under 7/8 months, I would only use it during the pre sleep wind down, and then remove it and teach to settle without it. After 7/8 months you can place it in their hand and teach them to put it in themselves.

What if my baby wont stop crying?

if at any stage you feel your baby is too upset and needs assistance with co-regulation, simply pick them up and give them a big boring cuddle.

Hold them, stay still. Don't pace or bounce, just hold and pat or run their back. You can shush, but try not to switch sides and move around panicking.

Be calm yourself, calm breeds calm.

Be patient, you are being responsive, give them time to regulate with you.

Continued...

This big boring cuddle might be 5 minutes, it might need to be 10 if they're very upset. Once you hear their breathing calm, pop them back to bed, and start the process again.

Over the coming days you will use this less frequently and they will do more settling in the cot.

I've been holding to sleep, can I help them learn to sleep in the cot before I let them learn to self settle?

Yes! Do your pre sleep ritual as planned, and then put baby down awake, but pat to sleep in the cot. If they become very upset, pick up and do the big boring cuddle and carry on until you manage to pat to sleep in the cot. Give this 2-3 extra days to teach them, naps happen in the cot.

Then you can start to let them self settle, and only pat to calm not to sleep.

How long do I try this for?

Try and settle for 40-60 minutes (less for the morning nap, more for the lunch nap, and don't worry about nap 3!)

What if they don't settle in that time?

If you near the end of your 40 minutes and they're calm and nearly asleep, you could pat to sleep, knowing we can wean off this.

If they're upset and not settling, cancel the nap and get them up.

You can try again in an hour or so after a feed and a break, or you can try tomorrow and just assist to sleep for the day if you need a break.

What if I end up off routine while they're learning because I have to cancel a nap and try later?

Short term problem, don't panic, use awake times for the day instead of routine and get on track the next day.

What if they're sitting up?

Each time you go to use your touch to help them calm, you can lie them down.

This is to teach them we have to lie down to go to sleep.

You might do this 5-10 times before giving them another 3 minutes of space to try to settle themselves.

What if they're standing up?

Each time you go to use your touch to help them calm, you can lie them down.

This is to teach them we have to lie down to go to sleep.

You might do this 5-10 times before giving them another 3 minutes of space to try to settle themselves.

I do the scoop and lie down all inside the cot barriers so they don't think I'm picking them up constantly.

Can I wait outside the room longer than 3 minutes?

Yes! If you're comfortable with longer, wait for up to 10 minutes of crying time.

What does crying up mean?

Crying is escalating, crying harder and harder or if they went straight to an emotional cry and stayed there.

What if they're not crying up?

If during your 3 minute wait they are just grizzling, or quiet or intermittently crying, just stay out. They might just go to sleep! If they start to properly cry, and it lasts 3 minutes, then go and start your settling.

What do I do if I choose to sit there?

Sit on a chair by the cot and close your eyes, model sleep. If they're at the standing stage, sit on the floor. Be patient! Wait 3 minutes.

What about re-settling?

Baby wakes and cries out? - We don't watch monitors!

Don't rush this, if they're Ok leave them!

Learning and up cry vs a down cry takes time.

Wait 3 minutes, are they crying up or down?

If crying up, go in and rub or pat baby's back, or, hand on chest.

If they're squirming away don't force it.

Shush and re-assure baby if upset.

Give baby another 3 minutes. Either leave, or sit by the cot.

Optional to double the time here to 6 minutes.

If they're not crying up, wait until they do for at least 30 seconds.

If crying up, rub or pat baby's back, or, hand on chest.

Repeat the cycle for 20-40 minutes for the second nap only.

How long do I re-settle for?

Try 20-40 minutes, but only for the middle nap, not nap 1! If you do want a longer morning nap, you can use this re-settle, but then let nap 2 be shorter. Don't expect 2 long naps.

My baby is wide awake what is the point?

If they're wide awake happy...leave the room, you don't need to be in there.

If they're upset while you try and settle and show no signs of re-settling, that's ok!

This is teaching time, and it takes time for them to learn to re-settle.

How many days before I see success?

If your baby has already mastered self settling at the start of the nap, re-settling will take another 3-7 days to master.

If you're not seeing results, ie less crying more attempts to settle, you need to do a little less. Back off your interactions a bit.

Can I rescue the nap instead?

If you just want to focus initially on self settling at the start and rescue the nap to extend it you can. Then you can start to work on re-settling independently when you're ready.

Why is re-settling so much harder?

Sleep pressure has massively reduced after 1 sleep cycle, so its harder to go **back** to sleep, than it is to intially fall asleep. Therefore it generally takes 2-3 times as long for them to learn to re-settle than it did to learn to self settle for the start of the nap.

be patient.

Can I pat back to sleep instead?

If your baby likes to be patted to sleep, yes! Then once you teach them over 7 days to take a longer nap, start to pat a little less each day and let them do more themselves.

Can I stay out of the room for longer?

Yes. If you prefer, you can stay out for 10 minutes at a time, and let your baby to try to get back to sleep on their own.

Can I feed, I'm worried they're hungry?

Offer a small feed any time you're worried they're hungry.

If it starts to look like a habit has developed, you can stop this.

Does the room need to be dark?

It certainly helps!

Do I have to use white noise?

It's helpful but not a must for all babies.

How can timing influence re-settling?

If you offer a nap too close to a failed re-settle, it can reinforce the short nap cycle. This might look like this.

12.30pm-1.45pm asleep

1.45-2.15pm try to re-settle

Fail, baby awake.

2.30pm feed to sleep and put down for a 45 minute nap.

This 45 minute nap is too close and too long. This reinforces for your baby that they don't need to take long naps because naps are offered so frequently.

If you need to offer a sleep early because of a failed re-settle, try to limit it to 10 minutes.

Otherwise, try to get your baby to within 30 minutes of their scheduled nap, and pop them down then.

A 10 minute nap, might look like this...

12.30pm-1.45pm asleep

1.45-2.15pm try to re-settle

Fail, baby awake.

3pm feed to sleep and put down for a 10-minute nap.

4.30pm - normal nap

OR

12.30pm-1.45pm asleep

1.45-2.15pm try to re-settle

Fail, baby awake.

2.30pm feed

4.00pm - slightly earlier slightly longer nap

Choose what works for you.

If your baby is over 8 months they won't take a third nap, and an early bed time can be helpful instead.

7 days program



1

Work on self settling for naps 1-2. Wait 3 minutes if baby wakes early.

2

Continue to work on self settling for naps 1-2. Wait for 3 minutes if baby wakes early.

3

Baby should be getting better at self settling. They won't be perfect. Be patient.

4

Start to work on re-settling for the lunch nap for at least 20 minutes.

5

Extend your re-settling for the lunch nap to 30 minutes. Remember it takes teaching time.

6

Lunch nap re-settle can extend to up to 40 minutes.

7

Self settling should be easy by day 7, & re-settling should be showing signs of improvement!

Can I take things slower?

Yes! You can look at that 7 day break down and spend 2-3 days at each stage instead of one. You can take it as slow as you want.

What are some signs it's working?

Signs things are working, either self settling at the start of the nap or re-settling, is quieter periods, less crying up, and more intermittent grizzles.

Happier in the cot.

Longer awake before starting to cry.

Closing eyes and trying to sleep.

Less intensity.

What do I do if it's not working?

Consider doing less if you think you might be too stimulating. Touch less, pick up less, wait longer. If you think it's the opposite and baby wont stop crying. Do the big boring cuddles to calm.

Why don't we watch the monitor to know they're awake?

I find this creates anxiety. Just use the sound function and wait for them to yell out or cry that they are awake. If they're quiet, they're happy!

How much dasy sleep does my baby need?

3-4 months - 3 naps, 3- 3.5 hours.

4-5 months - 3 naps 3 hours.

6-7 months - 2-3 naps 2.5-3 hours.

8-12 months - 2 naps 2-2.5 hours.

Awake Windows?

Age	Between naps	Before bedtime.
3 months	1 hour 45 min	1 hour 30 min
4 months	2 hours	1 hour 45 min
5 months	2 hours 15 min	2 hours
6 months	2 hours 30 min	2 hours
7 months	2 hours 30 min	2 hours
8 months	2-3 hours	3 hours 45 min
9 months	2-3 hours	4 hours
10-12 months	2-3 hours	4-4.5 hours

Awake Windows are a maximum, but they do need to increase over time.

If you have been stuck on the same awake time and are not following my routines shown, you may need to move onto the next awake time if baby is not showing signs of re-settling.

Undertiredness is a big reason for cat naps!

Awake time before bed in the evening gets much longer when your baby drops to 2 naps.

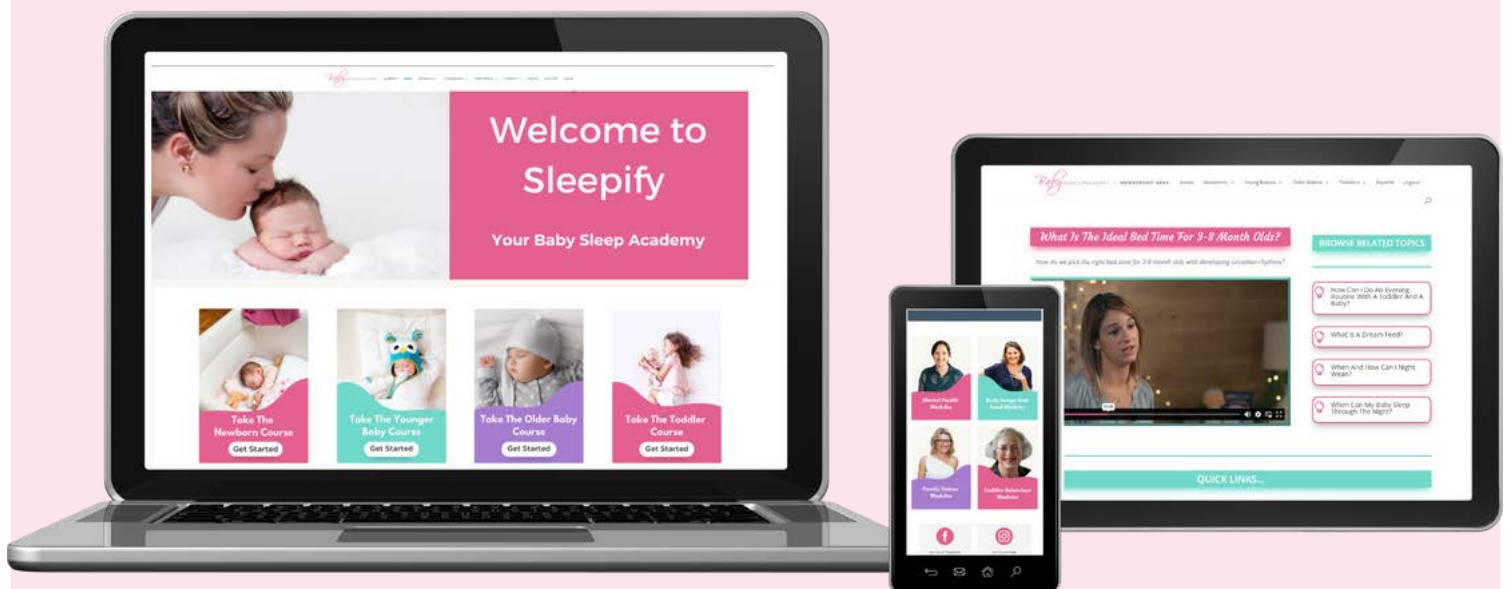
If your baby's awake time is much less than 2 hours this can be a big reason for short naps.

Much more than 2.5 hours at a young age, and over tiredness might be a problem.

Baby Sleep Consultant

If you enjoyed this, you'll love **Sleepify!**
Our exclusive members-only portal,
PACKED with guides like this, video
modules for all ages and stages.
Case studies, expert content, and live Q
and A each fortnight.

Try it for \$1.00



Author: Emma Purdue

Emma is the owner and founder of Baby Sleep Consultant, she is a Certified Infant and Child Sleep Consultant, Lead Educator for Baby Sleep Consultant Training, Happiest Baby on the Block Educator, has a Bachelor of Science and Diploma in Education, she is a Gentle Sleep Expert and Mother of 3.

