



The evidence-based sleep hygiene checklist

Fourteen changes that peer-reviewed research actually supports — and a seven-night log to find out which ones matter for you.

Most sleep advice is a long list of things that sound plausible. This one is short: fourteen changes across light, temperature, timing and what you drink, with the research behind them numbered and linked. Pin it above the bed, tick what you already do, and pick two or three of the rest.

The second page is a seven-night log. Sleep is highly individual — a 14:00 coffee wrecks one person and does nothing to another — so the point is not to do everything, it is to change one thing, log a week, and see whether your own numbers move.

Light

Light is the strongest signal your body clock receives. Get it in the morning, lose it at night.

- ☐ Get outside within an hour of waking — ten minutes of daylight, longer if it's overcast. Morning light sets the clock for the whole day. ^[1]
 - ☐ Evening light delays melatonin and pushes your clock later. Dim the lights for the last hour or two and switch evening lamps to warm bulbs (2700 K or lower). ^[2]
 - ☐ Screens off for the last hour — or at least night mode on and brightness down. Evening screen light delays melatonin and pushes your clock later. ^[2]
 - ☐ Sleep in a properly dark room: blackout blinds or a mask, and no standby LEDs.
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Temperature

Your core temperature has to fall to start sleep. Everything here helps it do that.

- ☐ Keep the bedroom cool — around 18–19 °C (64–66 °F). Sleep depends on the core cooling down, and a warm room fights it. ^[3]
 - ☐ A warm shower or bath one to two hours before bed. The heat pulls blood to the skin and speeds the core cool-down that follows. ^[4]
 - ☐ Move during the day — regular exercise reliably improves sleep quality. If a hard session late in the evening leaves you wired, move it earlier. ^[5]
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Timing

Regularity does more than most people expect. Wake time anchors the clock more than bedtime does.

- ☐ Aim for 7–9 hours of sleep, and allow a little more time in bed than that. Both short and long sleep track with higher mortality; seven to nine is where the curve bottoms out. ^{[6][7]}
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- ☐ Same wake time every day, within 30 minutes. ^[8]
- ☐ Keep weekend lie-ins under an hour. A shifted weekend schedule — 'social jet lag' — is linked with worse cardiometabolic markers. ^[8]
- ☐ If you nap, keep it under 30 minutes and finish before 15:00.

Caffeine, alcohol and food

The three that people most underestimate — and the easiest to test with a week of logging.

- ☐ Caffeine curfew six hours before bed — earlier if you're sensitive. Taken six hours before bedtime, 400 mg of caffeine measurably cut total sleep. Decaf is not caffeine-free either. ^[9]
- ☐ No alcohol as a sleep aid. It shortens the time to fall asleep, then fragments the second half of the night and suppresses REM. ^[10]
- ☐ Finish large meals two to three hours before bed. A light snack is fine.

Seven-night sleep log

Change one thing from the list, then log a week. Rate how rested you feel from 1 (wrecked) to 5 (fully recovered).

	Lights out	Wake time	Hours	Wake-ups	Last caffeine	Rested 1-5
Night 1						
Night 2						
Night 3						
Night 4						
Night 5						
Night 6						
Night 7						

How to use it

- 1 Tick what you already do. Most people are surprised how many boxes are empty in the light and caffeine groups.
- 2 Pick two or three items to change — not all fourteen. The ones you can test in a week are the best ones to start with.
- 3 Log seven nights. The 'rested' score matters more than the hours; it is what the other columns have to explain.
- 4 In Lamplit, the free sleep tracker keeps the same log without the pen — and with Pro, it imports nights automatically from Apple Health or Health Connect.

Prefer your phone to paper?

The same sleep log is built into Lamplit, free: it logs the entries for you and keeps sleep, mood, food and training in one place. Web, iPhone, Android, Apple Watch and Wear OS.

lamplit.ai — free account, no credit card

Sources

Where an item rests on a specific source, the number in brackets points to it. Every source is linked.

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10. Ebrahim, I.O., Shapiro, C.M., Williams, A.J. & Fenwick, P.B.C. (2013). Alcohol and sleep I: effects on normal sleep. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, 37(4), 539–549. <https://doi.org/10.1111/acer.12006>

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This checklist offers general information about sleep habits and is not medical advice. Persistent insomnia, loud snoring with daytime sleepiness, or sleep that does not improve with these changes deserves a conversation with a clinician.