

The Second Goodnight

Children rarely want to go to bed, preferring instead to stay up and play or simply spend time with parents. The result can be bedtime protests, stalling, or “curtain calls” (getting out of bed over and over to ask for something). The Second Goodnight is one way to teach your child to stay in bed and fall asleep independently with minimal protests. The following provides guidance on how to use the Second Goodnight with your child.

1. **Have a consistent bedtime routine and a consistent bedtime in place.** For your child, this routine should include the following: _____ and should end at _____ p.m.
2. **For each step of the bedtime routine, your child should earn a token for completing the task in a timely fashion.** Some examples of tokens are poker chips, tickets, or marbles placed in a jar. You will need to create some type of reward system where he can exchange tokens in the morning for a small age-appropriate prize (e.g., sticker, small toy, 15 extra minutes of screen time). One of the best rewards is not food or money but special time with a parent doing a favorite activity (e.g., bike ride, hitting baseballs, painting fingernails).
3. **Following a consistent bedtime routine and at a consistent time each night, your child should be placed in his own bed.**
4. **Once he is in bed, you should leave the room and return for a “second goodnight.”** If your child is still lying quietly in bed, he earns a token.
5. **If your child calls out or gets out of bed, return him to bed with minimal interaction other than to remind him it is bedtime.** Then remove one token.
6. **The first few nights, you should return for multiple goodnight checks (e.g., every 5 minutes).** Each time, the child should be verbally praised and given another token. After the first few nights, the time in between goodnight checks should be increased each night.
7. **If your child wakes during the night, you should respond immediately and consistently.** For your family, this response should be _____.

Important Things to Remember

- Although it may feel as if you are bribing your child for staying in bed, you are actually rewarding him for doing what you want. Over time, the need for rewards at bedtime will decrease as your child learns the skill of quickly and easily falling asleep at bedtime.

Parental attention is very motivating to children, this is why they will make “curtain calls” or protest at bedtime. The Second Goodnight provides your child the desired attention, but in this case for the behavior that you want to see—him staying in bed and falling asleep. By regularly checking on your child and rewarding him for staying in bed, you are providing brief, frequent, and positive interactions that will reduce the stress of bedtime and help your child fall asleep easier.
