

big city moms
navigating toddler
bedtime battles 

Tuck-in time, Lights out, Night-night . Call it whatever you like but with toddlers the time between when you first put them down and when they actually fall asleep can seem like hours. Bedtime resistance in toddlers is nothing new, you did it to your parents and they probably did it to their parents. But when the battle at bedtime starts to take it out of you, it's time for a new strategy. We asked the experts at Dream Team Baby how to stop the bedtime tussle and regain your "me" time.

Navigating Toddler Bedtime Battles

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When it comes to bedtime, toddlers and preschoolers are masters at stalling, curtains calls, and tugging at our (weary) heartstrings. If your bedtime has turned into an hour-long Broadway production here's some advice to getting things back on track:

1. **Make sure your child is tired.** If a nap ends too late in the day, children may legitimately not be tired at bedtime. This often leads to sleep protests and stalling tactics. Make sure your child is awake for approximately four hours leading up to bedtime.
2. **Simplify bedtime.** Sometimes bedtime routines can be too long. Prolonging the inevitable can actually build up feelings of anxiousness. So cut back on the bedtime routine. Trim five books down to two. Sing one song instead of three.
3. **Give them choice.** Empower toddlers at bedtime by giving them control where appropriate. Offering limited options will help them feel empowered. Just be careful that choice is limited. For example, lay out five books and let them choose two, give them two pajama options, or let them choose the song you'll sing before lights out.
4. **Prepare in advance.** Set the scene before bedtime begins so the logistics of bedtime doesn't draw things out unnecessarily. In the late afternoon, carve out time to draw the shades, fill the humidifier, lay out pajama options, dim the lights, and lay out water. This will help you to keep engaged with your child so they have less "down time" to start brainstorming about how to best commandeer bedtime.
5. **Anticipate, set clear boundaries, and remain calm.** Try to predict things that could get them out of bed. Fulfill likely requests before they are requested (i.e., take two sips of water, have final trip to the potty, etc). Covering your bases helps keep the negotiation down. Then when the lights go out and you hear, "Mommy, I'm thirsty" hold your ground. Resist the temptation to reiterate all the reasons you know they are NOT thirsty. Calmly tell them they already had their water and now it is time to sleep. Stay neutral and keep your interactions succinct.
6. **Examine your daytime behavior.** If you give in to all of your child's requests during the day, why would they expect bedtime to run any differently? Following through with consequences during the day will help your child understand that you mean what you say when you say that it is time for bed.

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