

## In this episode

*Play School shines a light on the importance of positive sleep routines for young children. It's time to put on your pj's, relax and 'Get Ready for Bed'!*

Follow the Play School evening routine as the toys finish their day of play, enjoy a healthy 'rainbow dinner' then splish-splash in the bath before getting ready for bed. We see the Play School friends unwind with a gentle relaxation exercise, snuggle up with a favourite toy, then share in a bedtime story. Finally, it's time for a classic lullaby, brought to life in a delightful new Play School animation.

## Follow up

Play School collaborated with [Professor Harriet Hiscock](#) when creating 'Get Ready for Bed'. Prof. Hiscock is a paediatrician and postdoctoral research fellow. She is co-director of the Unsettled Babies Clinic and Group Leader of Health Services at the Centre for Community Child Health, Murdoch Children's Research Institute. Here are some her helpful tips and considerations when establishing and maintaining positive sleep habits for young children and their families:

- A predictable bedtime routine is essential for healthy sleep. Routines don't need to start at the exact same time every night, but it's a good idea to follow a pattern that allows your child to anticipate what's coming next. This helps children to feel secure in the understanding that winding down for sleep is the expectation.
- It's important to [avoid screens before bedtime](#). Alternative activities before bed could include storytelling, drawing and quiet time with family. Read more about why screen time is not advisable before bed in [The Conversation](#).
- It is expected that young children will test boundaries, so it's a good idea to set reasonable limits for bed time 'curtain calls' (where children continuously look for reasons to avoid settling into bed). It's important for all adults in the family to have a consistent approach to bedtime.



Nick and Rachael tuck the Play School friends in for a good night's rest.

- If your child feels worried about falling asleep alone, they may become reliant on you staying with them until falling asleep. This could cause confusion or distress when your child naturally stirs through the night and notices you have gone. If your child sleeps in their own room, you can encourage them to fall asleep more independently through a gentle transitional program, implemented over a series of nights:
  - Sit in a chair next to your child's bed and hold their hand.
  - Sit close by, gradually moving closer to the door.
  - Slowly leave the room while the child is still awake.
- Breathing and mindfulness techniques are valuable skills to teach children, especially if they feel anxious about bedtime or have a challenging time winding down at the end of the day. Find scripts to help guide children through mindfulness experiences via [Green Child Magazine](#).
- For older toddlers and pre-schoolers, sometimes napping for only 1 sleep cycle (about 45 minutes) during the day may be preferable if you are finding it hard to get them to bed at night.
- Plenty of physical exercise that raises heart rate through the day leads to more restful sleep.
- For bespoke childhood sleep support in your setting (home or early learning) visit [Safe Sleep Space](#).

Rachael guides us through a simple and effective relaxation exercise. Try it with your children at home or in your early learning setting. Remember to speak slowly, gently and clearly. Allow a few beats of silence for children to complete each action.

## Slow Time

Written by Play School episode outline, Kylie Montague.

*Slow time now*

*Take a deep breath*

*Let it out slowly and lie down to rest*

*Wiggle your toes and let them go still*

*Now your knees*

*And your hips*

*And your tummy until*

*You're up to your chest*

*And your neck and your head*

*Scrunch up your face*

*And then let it rest*

*Tense up your arms*

*And then let them lie flat*

*Then wiggle your fingers*

*Deep breaths and relax.*

Nick reads classic Australian bedtime story 'Time for Bed' (1997) by Mem Fox. Recommended bedtime stories for young children often involve rhyme and repetition, predictable elements and hold a steady pace. Check out these bedtime books that also incorporate mindfulness and relaxation practices:

- **My Mindful Little One** (2016) by Bernadette Carelse and Paula Bowles.
- **Good Night Yoga** (2015) by Mariam Gates and Sarah Jane Hinder.



'Ready for Bed' is structured to mimic a recommended 6 step evening routine:

- 1) Moderate exercise in the afternoon
- 2) Screens off (at least 1 hour before bed)
- 3) Dinner time
- 4) Bath /clean teeth/ pjs
- 5) Quiet time (reading a story book together)
- 6) Into bed / lullaby / good night.



*Doing plenty of outdoor activity during the day will lead to a healthy night's sleep.*

## Learning experience ideas

### 'Ready for Bed' pretend play

Set up a cosy pretend bedroom, bathroom and dinner table in your play area. Create upcycled snuggly beds using cardboard boxes lined with soft pillows and old towels as blankets. Encourage children to help their toys follow the evening routine shared in the episode.

Pretend play will empower children to take the lead in recalling and implementing the 6 step 'Ready for Bed' routine – making associations between play and real life. Reflective discussion with adults can help children build a deeper understanding about **why** some predictable routines can help us feel happy and healthy.

Link this experience to EYLF outcome 3.2 - *Children take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing.*

### Make a personalised 'Ready for Bed' poster

Encourage children to discuss their own rest or bedtime routine at home or in your early learning setting. Document children's comments and ideas on a mind-map. Sharing and comparing routines from home is a great way for educators to build reciprocal relationships and partner with families (link to EYLF Principles 1 and 2).

Use large piece of cardboard to create a poster documenting the main stages of your routine (as a group or individually). Invite children to illustrate the poster and display in their bedroom or child care rest area. Use the poster as a positive strategy to redirect challenging rest/bedtime behaviours. Ask children to the check where they are up to in the routine and share what is coming next. This is an empowering way to promote co-operation and remind children of the shared bedtime expectation at your place.

## Songs

Title: *This Little Boy*

Composer: M Miller / Paula L Zajan

Publisher: Allen & Co

Title: *Run A Little*

Composer: Satis Coleman / Alice Thorn

Publisher: The Willis Music Co

Title: *Everybody Likes Fruit And Vegetables*

Composer: Jay Mankita

Publisher: Dreams on Tape Music

Title: *Sing A Rainbow*

Composer: Arthur Hamilton

Publisher: Warner Chappell Music

Title: *Splish Splash Splosh*

Composer: Peter Mapleson / Robyn Mapleson

Publisher: ABC Music Publishing

Title: *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*

Composer: Traditional

Publisher: ABC Music Publishing



## Credits

### Book

*Time for Bed* (1997) Mem Fox & Jane Dyer.  
Red Wagon Books / Harcourt Brace; 1st edition.

### Series Producer

Sophie Emtage

### Childhood sleep advisor

Prof. Harriet Hiscock

### Executive Producer

Jan Stradling

### Notes for Families and Educators

compiled by early childhood producer, Laura Stone.