



NC SEEDLING

Preschoolers and Bedtime



Study to
Explore
Early
Development

North Carolina
SEED

**UNC-CH,
Department of
Epidemiology**

Winter 2020

www.NCSEED.org

NOTES

- NC SEED has enrolled 396 families
- We truly appreciate our participating families!

Most kids, age five and under, need a couple hours of calming down time that includes dinner at home, and then a full-blown bedtime routine, with story time and snuggling, in order to fall asleep easily at night. Here are some tips to help create a routine and settle them down:

Help your child feel safe

It is completely normal for young children to have fears and worries. Sure, you know they are safe in bed, but they don't necessarily feel that way. If your child expresses fear, listen and acknowledge. For example, say "I hear you're worried about monsters... That can be scary... Let's do something about that." Then make some "Monster Spray" to spray around the room. You could buy some lavender air freshener and make your own label with a big warning on it for the monsters like "Makes monsters disappear!!". Or get a broom and together sweep the monsters out of the closet and from under the bed. You want to communicate to your child

that this is not an emergency, but rather a small challenge that you can support her to solve. Talk to the monsters in a powerful way that puts them in their place: "Monsters aren't allowed in Samantha's bedroom.... Time to go now!"

Use play to diminish anxiety earlier in the evening

Help your child work through any worries or frustrations from the day with physical play that gets your child laughing for ten minutes. You can let him be a scary monster and act frightened in a goofy way, or you can just get him laughing by being a bucking bronco or playing an active game like Simon-Says with goofy actions. Avoid doing this right before bed or it will wind your child up. After dinner is a good time, followed by a bath and story to calm down.

Offer to check on your child

If your child knows that you will come check in after five

minutes, and then again in five more minutes, he or she is much more likely to be able to settle into sleep. Tell your child ahead of time that you won't say anything, you will just come check. Then do it. Set a timer if you need the reminder. Just pause in his doorway. He will probably be waiting for you to come and will notice your presence. Helping him feel secure this way might be all he needs, and you can gradually ease out of it.

Stick to a routine, since the same order of things every night increases your child's sense of safety and helps him or her feel calm.

Adapted from <https://www.ahaparenting.com/ages-stages/preschoolers/Life-Preschooler/bedtime>



Family Fun: Movie Night

Cold weather sometimes limits family fun times. Try a special at-home movie night.

- Make a sign announcing what is "Now Showing" and the time.
- Make a pretend ticket booth. Use a small

table set up with paper tickets and play money.

- Make popcorn and serve it in popcorn bags.
- Invite friends. Have each guest bring their favorite blanket, a pillow or stuffed friend.
- Choose a movie the whole family will enjoy, or take turns choosing the movie so everyone has a chance to pick a favorite to watch together.