

FACT SHEET

Why screens stop you getting a good night's sleep.

Getting a good night's sleep is really important for mental and physical good health. It also helps you to process what you have learned during the day, and enables you to be alert and able to focus and concentrate the next day.

It's not just what you are doing on your computer or other devices that can affect you getting a good night's sleep.

As do all animals, humans have an internal body clock. Your brain is designed to respond to light and day – making you feel sleepy when it is dark, and wakeful when it is light. This is one of the reasons why you might feel sleepier in the winter but feel more alert and full of energy in the summer – because there is more daylight.

Artificial light and blue light from screens interfere with the body's natural body clock and affect the sleep-wake cycle. The blue light from screens such as TV, mobile phones, tablets, computers and video games can prevent a good night's sleep by suppressing the sleep hormone **melatonin** that makes you feel sleepy.

As a teenager you should be aiming to get around 9 hours sleep a night. So if you have to get up at 7am, then you go to bed to sleep at around 10pm.

If you find it difficult to drop off to sleep, then there are a number of things you can do to help. Our Good Sleep Guide offers tips and advice on what you can do. However, one of the key things you need to consider is turning off all screens an hour before you want to go to sleep. Yes really!

If you need to get up at 7am, then you need to stop using and switch off screens at 9pm so that your brain is ready for sleep when you go to bed at 10pm. This can be really difficult if you are used to watching You Tube or messaging your friends until lights out.

Overleaf are some ideas of things that you can do instead of using your screen devices just before you go to bed.



Things to do after switching off screens and before going to bed

These are suggestions to help you wind down before you get into bed to go to sleep.

- Have a warm relaxing bath
- Make a caffeine free drink and have a non-sugary snack NB chocolate contains caffeine
- Play a musical instrument (unless you play the drums!)
- Read – but nothing too exciting. An old favourite that you have read before is a good idea.
- Listen to an audio book – again nothing too exciting. A familiar story from when you were younger can be helpful.
- Listen to music – create a classical or acoustic playlist on an iPod or MP3 player (phones should be switched off and preferably not in your bedroom at all)
- Use a guided meditation. There are many scripts and CDs available on the internet or from your local library. Or you can write your own script.
- Practise mindfulness
- Colouring
- Do a jigsaw puzzle
- Play with PlayDoh or Kinetic sand
- Draw or doodle
- Play patience or solitaire with a standard pack of cards
- Sort out your sock drawer or tidy your bedroom floor or desk
- Plan for tomorrow

Write down your important tasks for tomorrow.

Write down what you have done to prepare for these important tasks.

For example:

- ✓ I have checked my planner and have done all my homework due in tomorrow.
- ✓ I have packed my bag for tomorrow.
- ✓ I have checked I have bus fare and lunch money
- ✓ I have set my alarm clock for 7am
- ✓ I have all my school clothes ready

- Try this simple meditation:
 - Sit or lie down and make yourself comfortable.
 - Try not to fall asleep. For this reason it is best not to lie on your bed if possible.
 - Allow your breathing to get into a steady rhythm then close your eyes.
 - Pay attention to your breath as it enters and leaves your body.
 - Allow your thoughts and sensations to come and go.
 - Stay focused on your breathing.