

# Try This Trick for Better Sleep

By Jancee Dunn  
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## Put some space between you and your phone.

This exercise was inspired by a [2025 study](#) in the journal Technology, Mind and Behavior in which subjects who did a 30-minute digital detox before bed reported that the next day, they used their phones less and felt better, compared to days when they didn't detox.

So turn your phone off 30 minutes before bed to help prepare for sleep and leave it off for the rest of the night.

Ideally, you're able to put your phone in another room, experts said. If not, place it out of arm's reach, so you'd have to leave your bed to get it, said Kostadin Kushlev, an associate professor of psychology at Georgetown University who runs the [Happy Tech Lab](#) and was a coauthor on the above study.

If there are people you can't be out of contact with, like your parents or your kids, Dr. Paruthi said, put your phone on "do not disturb" mode, and [set it to allow calls](#) only from them.

## Make bedtime inviting.

Plan ahead so you have some analog activities that you can do instead of scrolling, Dr. Paruthi recommended.

You can view this half-hour as creative bonus time: [Write a letter](#) to someone, start a journal, do some knitting. One of my family members is working on a Lego version of the Concorde jet before bed, which may take her all summer.

Or you can spend that time doing something calming, like meditating, Dr. Paruthi added. I have been doing my bedtime ritual very slowly so that it fills a half hour. It includes an elaborate skin care routine, stretching, tidying up and laying out my clothes for the next day.

Manoush Zomorodi, the author of "Body Electric: The Hidden Health Costs of the Digital Age and New Science to Reclaim Your Well-Being," told me she rolls a massage ball under her feet, which soothes her and releases tension. "And I'll pet my adorable dog, who's basically like my relaxation talisman," she added.

## Bring a book to bed.

Dr. Kushlev also suggested reading a book (preferably analog). So I sought advice from Ann Patchett, author of the new novel [“Whistler”](#) and a devoted bedtime reader. She recommended reading books that are engaging and enjoyable, and nothing that you know will upset you.

Patchett said she loves to suggest middle-grade novels to adults, such as [“The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane”](#) by Kate DiCamillo. The book has short chapters, so it’s good for bedtime, but is “an entire novel that is as good as anything you will ever read in your life.”

She also recommended “Tiny Beautiful Things,” a collection of essays from “Dear Sugar,” the advice column by [Cheryl Strayed](#) — a “rush of compassion” in book form.

Try this 30-minute detox every night before bed for a week and see if you are able to fall asleep faster or stay asleep longer, even by a little bit.

“Even a small change is a win,” Dr. Paruthi said.