

How to Calculate Time in Bed

Sleep Log. Keep a log of the total amount of time you spend asleep each day (see "Sleep Log"). Start keeping this log one week before you start modifying your sleep schedule. This is your baseline week.

Initial Time in Bed Prescription. Calculate the total amount of time you spend asleep each day for your baseline week. Add up these numbers to get your total sleep time for the week, then divide by seven to get your average daily sleep time. Add thirty minutes to this number to obtain your daily time in bed prescription for your first week of sleep modification.

Wake Up Time. Select a wake up time that is suitable for you.

Bedtime. Calculate backwards from your selected wake up time to determine what time you need to go to bed to get your prescribed amount of time in bed. Use this as your earliest allowable bedtime for your first week of sleep modification. It's OK to go to bed later if you are not sleepy at this bedtime, but don't go to bed or doze off any earlier. If, when you first calculate your bedtime, you find that it is much later than you desire, it's OK to select an earlier wake up time and redo the calculation. Just make sure your total time in bed ends up matching your time in bed prescription.

Follow the Schedule. Once you have chosen your earliest bedtime and fixed wake up time, stick to them for a full week before making any changes (unless the schedule is causing serious problems).

Revise Time in Bed Prescription. At the end of the first week of sleep modification, revise your time in bed prescription as follows, based on the amount of time you spent asleep during the last few days of the week:

If you slept for at least 80% of your prescribed time in bed and you were usually not sleepy during the day, keep the same schedule.

If you slept for less than 80% of your prescribed time in bed, reduce your time in bed by 15 minutes (preferably by choosing a later bedtime, but it's also OK to choose an earlier wake up time, or a combination of the two).

If you slept for at least 85% of your prescribed time in bed but you still felt sleepy during the day, increase your time in bed by 15 minutes (by choosing an earlier bedtime, a later wake up time, or a combination of the two).

Follow Revised Schedule. Stick to your new time in bed prescription for a full week, then repeat the process above to re-compute your prescription for the following week.

Arrive at Stable Schedule. Your goal is to arrive at a schedule in which you are consistently in bed asleep for 80% or more of the period from bedtime to rise time, and you feel alert and well-rested during the day. If you achieve this, the absolute number of hours you end up sleeping does not matter, because you are sleeping efficiently and effectively.