

# Toddler Sleep Environment Audit

Room-by-room checklist for optimal toddler and preschool sleep

---

Your child's sleep environment accounts for roughly 30% of sleep quality. Fix the room before you fix the routine. Walk through each section and check off what's already in place — anything unchecked is your action list.

## Light Control

- Blackout curtains or shades installed** — The room should be dark enough that you can't read a book. Even small light leaks matter.
- No blue or white night lights** — If a night light is needed, use red or amber. Blue/white wavelengths suppress melatonin.
- All electronics screens off or removed from bedroom** — TV, tablet, phone screens — even on standby — emit light
- LED indicator lights covered (monitor, humidifier, etc.)** — Use electrical tape or black stickers over any standby LEDs
- Hallway light managed** — If they need the door cracked, make sure hallway light doesn't pour in. Use a dim hall night light.

## Temperature & Air Quality

- Room temperature 65–70°F (18–21°C)** — Slightly cooler than infant range. Cool rooms promote deeper sleep.
- Room thermometer placed near the bed** — Wall temperature can differ from thermostat reading
- Ceiling fan or air circulation** — Moving air helps regulate body temperature through the night
- Humidifier if air is dry (30–50% humidity ideal)** — Dry air = stuffy nose = mouth breathing = fragmented sleep
- Air purifier with HEPA filter (if allergies or poor air quality)** — Reduces dust, pollen, and particulates that disrupt sleep
- No strong scents (air fresheners, scented candles, plug-ins)** — Synthetic fragrances contain VOCs that irritate airways
- Windows openable for fresh air during the day** — Ventilate the room daily. CO2 builds up in closed bedrooms.

## Sound Environment

- White noise or pink noise machine – 50–65 dB (dishwasher level). Continuous, not wave or nature sounds with variation.
- Sound machine placed across the room (not next to head) – AAP suggests at least 7 feet from the child, volume below 50 dB for infants
- Machine runs all night (not on a timer) – Sudden silence at 2 AM can cause a wake-up. Continuous through the night.
- External noise buffered – If near a road or loud house area, add weather stripping or a second sound machine

## Sleep Surface & Bedding

- Firm, properly sized mattress – If transitioning to a toddler or twin bed, ensure it fits the frame with no gaps
- Bed rail or floor bed if they roll out – Pool noodle under the fitted sheet works as a cheap bed rail for toddler beds
- Breathable, natural-fiber bedding when possible – Cotton or bamboo. Avoid synthetic fabrics that trap heat.
- One pillow (low-profile, toddler-sized) if over 18 months – No pillow needed before 18 months. Keep it thin.
- Sleep sack still used if under 2–3 years – Keeps them warm without loose blankets. Also deters crib climbing.

## Safety & Boundaries

- Furniture anchored to walls – Dressers, bookshelves, and anything climbable must be secured
- Blind cords eliminated or secured out of reach – Cordless blinds are the safest option
- Outlet covers in place
- Door handled (knob cover or door monkey) if they leave the room at night – Not to lock them in – to create a clear boundary that the room is the sleep space
- OK-to-wake clock set – Teaches them when it's morning vs. still night. Hatch, Mella, or LittleHippo are popular options.
- No toys in bed or accessible from bed at night – One comfort object (stuffed animal, blanket) is fine. A toy bin within reach is not.

## Pre-Sleep Environment Setup

- Dim lights in the house 30–60 minutes before bed** — Bright overhead lights suppress melatonin. Switch to lamps or dimmers after dinner.
- No screens for at least 1 hour before bed** — Blue light from screens delays melatonin onset by 30+ minutes even in toddlers
- Room prepared before the bedtime routine starts** — Curtains closed, sound machine on, sleep sack laid out. No scrambling.

The single highest-impact change for most families: blackout the room and add white noise. These two things alone fix about 40% of toddler sleep problems without changing anything about the routine.