

the Go to Bed Snooze Letter

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7 Q's for The Sleep Guru

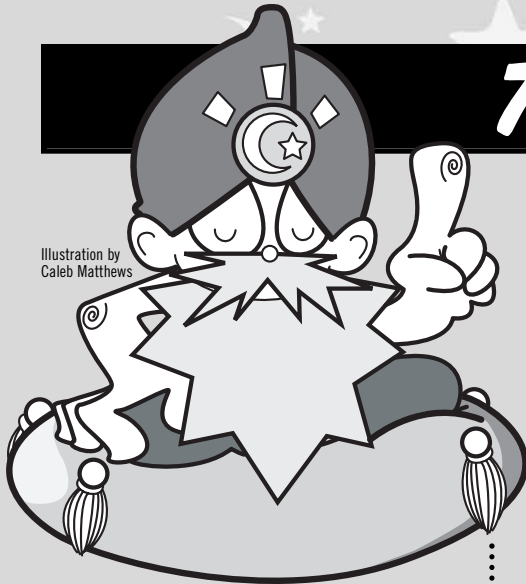


Illustration by
Caleb Matthews

1 I have trouble going to bed even when it's late. What will help me unwind?

Find something that relaxes you and make a ritual of it. For some people, it's reading; for others, it's taking a shower before bed or knowing that they finished things they needed to get done. You are not alone – according to the Fall 2005 UA Quality of Sleep Project which surveyed 1,837 students

living in the residence halls, the average bedtime was 12:45 A.M. and 72% reported having trouble sleeping because they could not fall asleep within 30 minutes.

2 As a freshman, I've had a hard time adjusting my sleep schedule to college life and wind up getting a lot less than what I got in high school. Any ideas to help me get back on track?

Two words: regimented schedule. Chances are, you had a lot more consistency with wake up and bedtimes back in high school. Having a more regular sleep schedule can work wonders for your day. People sometimes confuse consistency with less fun and variety, but the opposite is often the case. Better scheduling cuts down on stress and allows you to maximize time that too often gets squandered on late nights of TV or other distractions.

3 With classes, work and friends, I don't have enough time for sleep. What can I do?

The challenge here is making time for sleep, since you'll need enough of it to be at your best in other areas of your life. Many students find this difficult, averaging only 6.7 hours of sleep a night, when 7-9 hours is recommended.* The solution? Plan for sleep as if you would plan for class, work or study time. Once you've done that, adequate sleep and improved all-around performance can serve as incentives to help you keep up the routine.

4 I tend to be sleep deprived during the week, but I play catch-up by sleeping in late on the weekends. So it all must average out, right?

On paper, it may average out – with your
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Sleep: How much do you need? What is it good for?

By Jennifer H. Breslin and Richard R. Bootzin, UA Department of Psychology & Sleep Research Laboratory

Most adults need somewhere between 6-10 hours of sleep per night. Different people need different amounts of sleep to feel rested. If you are frequently tired or irritable during the day and find yourself sleeping more than an extra 2 hours per night on weekends, then you are probably not getting enough sleep during the week.

Sleep is important for a number of reasons. It restores our energy, fights off illness and fatigue, helps us think more clearly and creatively, strengthens memory and allows us to learn more effectively, and generally produces a more positive mood and better performance throughout the day. It is particularly important to develop a

consistent sleep schedule in which you go to sleep and wake-up about the same time each day, seven days a week. Consistent sleep patterns have been positively correlated with grade point average in college students.

How to get more and better sleep

- Follow a consistent sleep schedule. Your body has a circadian (24-hour) clock that thrives on routine. Setting a consistent, realistic bedtime and wake time will help you to feel your best during the day. Develop a relaxing sleep ritual – it is easier to transition to sleep if you follow the same pattern of getting ready for bed every night. In addition, plan your day around the times



that you are most alert. Try to think about your typical energy levels during the course of a day when you are scheduling classes, work, or other activities.

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7 Q's for The Sleep Guru

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body repaying all that weekday sleep debt – but in reality the catch-up game creates a vicious cycle that can make for very bad Monday mornings. During the past month, only 16% of students reported feeling rested upon awaking at least five days out of the week. Naps may help in the short term (85% of students living in the residence halls have taken one in the past month), but experts are divided as to whether they offer a real benefit or are merely a band-aid solution over the course of the week.*

5 *Drinking alcohol makes me tired, so it must help me sleep, right?*

Alcohol makes you tired because, as a depressant, it has sedative qualities. However, alcohol impacts sleep quality for the worse by preventing you from getting the kind of deep sleep that you need to wake up feeling refreshed.

6 *I've noticed that I've been getting sick more often and I heard getting more sleep could help. Is this true?*

It's no secret that getting enough sleep can boost your immune system and keep you from getting colds and other ailments. Adequate sleep can also hold stress levels in check, which can go a long way toward improving both your health and your state of mind.

7 *I have a roommate and live in the Residence Halls. This has been hard on my sleep since I am used to having a room to myself. What can I do to cope?*

Having a roommate for the first time can be a big transition. The key to coping is to establish a good line of communication, set mutually agreed upon ground rules (e.g. lights-out curfew, noise limitations, visitors) and compromise. You don't have to be best friends to have a good and respectful relationship. Keep in mind that a little civility and understanding can go a long way toward making your roommate experience a positive one and helping you sleep easier.

* Fall 2005 University of Arizona Student Sleep Survey (n=1,837)

Sleep: How much do you need? What is it good for?

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- Although you may be tempted to pull an “all-nighter” before an exam, remember that sleep deprivation has serious consequences. Sleep is important for learning and memory, alertness, and performance – the three things you want to maximize in an exam situation.
- Avoid long naps if you're having problems sleeping at night. The urge can be strong, but sleeping during the day for long periods of time will continue to disrupt your sleep cycle. A short nap during the day may be helpful if you're feeling tired, but work it into your regular schedule and nap every day at about the same time. Keep the nap to about 30 minutes.
- Exercise regularly and the quality of your sleep will improve. However, do not exercise close to the time that you plan to go to sleep.
- Exposure to bright light in the morning helps to send a “wake up” signal to your brain and will make it easier the next day to wake up at your scheduled time.
- Before you get into bed, do all of your mental planning for the next day. Worrying in bed can distract you from falling asleep for hours.
- Do not eat, study, or watch TV in bed. Designate your bed for sleeping only.
- Stimulants such as nicotine and caffeine (found in coffee, tea, and colas) disrupt sleep, so it is best to stay away from them after lunch-time.
- Finally, if you do drink, consume alcohol in moderation. Alcohol, while it may initially help you to fall asleep, disrupts

sleep later in the night and leaves you feeling less rested (as well as dehydrated) in the morning.

Typical problems college students have with sleep

Most of us have difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep at some point in our lives. Sometimes, these problems are temporary and can be due to transient stress. In other cases, the problem persists for weeks or even months. If you are unable to fall asleep for more than 30 minutes after going to bed 3 or more nights per week for 4 or more weeks, then you may have what is known as primary insomnia. Since insomnia may be due to psychological and physiological causes, if your insomnia persists for more than a month, you should see your doctor. Go to the Campus Health Service or to the Insomnia Clinic at UMC.

Resources

The Better Sleep Council

www.bettersleep.org

Provides recommendations on how to sleep better. It covers everything on sleep from how to choose the right mattress to ways of improving your sleeping habits.

The National Sleep Foundation

www.sleepfoundation.org

UA Campus Health Service

621-9202; www.health.arizona.edu

Insomnia Clinic of the University of Arizona Sleep Disorders Center at UMC

626-6254



Do you want...
less stress? better grades?
less sickness? better mood?

Go to bed!*

* Getting enough sleep each night improves ability to manage stress, boosts the immune system, sharpens concentration and memory for studying and enhances overall physical and emotional health.

Tips for Better Sleep:

- ★ Keep regular bedtime/waking hours
- ★ Exercise regularly
- ★ Avoid caffeine and nicotine in the evening
- ★ Keep up with schoolwork
- ★ Minimize sleep disruptions with a dark, quiet bedroom (try ear plugs and a sleep mask)