

Matt Walker “[6 tips for better sleep](#)” | Sleeping with Science, a TED series

Listen to the video, and fill in the blanks. Answers and definitions of words in bold are below.

We can all have a bad night of sleep, and that's perfectly (1) _____. But how can we try to improve both the quantity and the (2) _____ of our sleep? Here are 6 **scientifically grounded** tips for better sleep.

The first tip is regularity. Go to bed at the same time and wake up at the same time. Regularity is (3) _____ and it will actually **anchor** your sleep and improve both the quantity and the quality, no matter whether it's the (4) _____ or the weekend, or even if you've had a bad night of sleep. And the reason is because deep within your brain you actually have a master 24-hour clock. It expects regularity and works best under conditions of regularity, including the control of your sleep-wake schedule. Many of us use an alarm to (5) _____, but very few of us use a “to bed alarm”. And that's something that can be helpful.

Next tip, is temperature. Keep it cool. It turns out that your brain and your body need to drop their **core** temperature by about 1°C, or around 2 to 3°F, in order to initiate sleep and then to stay asleep. And this is the reason that you will always find it easier fall asleep in a room that's too cold, than too hot, so the current recommendation is to aim for a (6) _____ temperature of around about 65°F or a little over 18°C. It sounds cold. But cold it must be.

The next tip is darkness. We are a dark-**deprived** society and in fact we need darkness specifically in the evening **to trigger** the release of a hormone called melatonin. And melatonin helps regulate the healthy timing of our sleep. In the last hour before bed, try to stay away from all of those (7) _____ screens and tablets and phones. **Dim** down half the lights in your house. You'd actually be quite surprised at how sleepy that can make you feel. If you like, you can wear an eye mask, or you can have blackout **shades**. And that will help best regulate that critical sleep hormone of melatonin.

Next tip is, walk it out. Don't stay in bed (8) _____ for long periods of time. And the general **rule of thumb** is if you've been trying to fall asleep and it's been 25 minutes or so, or you've woken up and you can't get back to sleep after 25 minutes, the recommendation is to get out of bed and go and do something different. And the reason is because your brain is an incredibly associative **device**. The brain has learned the association that the bed is this trigger of **wakefulness**, and we need to break that association. And by getting out of bed. Can go and do something else. Only return to bed when you're sleepy, and in that way, gradually your brain will relearn the association that your bed is this place of sound and (9) _____ sleep.

The fifth tip is something that we've actually already spoken about in detail in this series, which is the impact of alcohol and caffeine. So a good rule of thumb here is to try to stay away from caffeine in the (10) _____ and in the evening. And certainly try not to go to bed too **tipsy**.

The final tip, have a wind down (11) _____. I think many of us in the modern world, we expect to be able to dive into bed at night, switch off the light and we think that sleep is also just like a light switch. That we should immediately be able to fall asleep. Well, unfortunately, sleep isn't quite like that for most of us. Sleep as a **physiological** process is much more similar to landing a plane. It takes time for your brain to gradually descend down onto the firm **bedrock** of

good sleep. In the last 20 minutes before bed or the last half an hour, even the last hour, disengage from your computer and your phone and try to do something 12) _____. Find out what works for you and when you have found it, stick to that routine.

The last thing I should note is that if you are suffering from a sleep disorder, for example from insomnia or **sleep apnea**, then these tips aren't necessarily going to help you. If I was your sports coach, I could give you all of these tips to improve your performance, but if you have a broken **ankle**, it's not going to make a difference. We have to 13) _____ the broken ankle first before we can get back to improving the quality of your performance. And it's the same way with sleep. So if you think you have a sleep disorder, just go and speak with your doctor. That's the best piece of advice. Where do we stand then? In all of this 14) _____ about sleep? Well, I think the **evidence** is clear. We can think of sleep almost like a life support system. In fact, some may even call sleep a superpower.

Scientifically grounded: based on science.

Anchor: a kind of hook at the end of a chain to attach a ship or boat at sea. To anchor = to attach.

Core: central part (as in apple core).

To be deprived: not to have something, to be in want, possibly to be poor.

To trigger: to set off, to initiate (a trigger, a mechanism to start something, a finger lever on a gun to fire).

To dim (down): to turn lights down.

Shades: cloth, plastic, wood or metal sheet covering a window that keeps out the light.

Rule of thumb: a simple calculation or rule to do things without too much analysis.

Device: an object, a mechanism to do something.

Wakefulness: the state of being awake

Tipsy: a little drunk.

Physiological: something relating to physiology, the normal functioning of the body, or a living organism.

Bedrock: solid rock below the ground.

Sleep apnea: poor breathing, irregular or disturbed breathing.

Ankle: the part of the body which joins the foot to the leg.

Evidence: information, objects and materials that are used to prove something, to find out something.

Answers to gaps: 1) normal; 2) quality; 3) King; 4) weekday; 5) to wake up; 6) bedroom; 7) computer; 8) awake; 9) consistent; 10) afternoon; 11) routine; 12) relaxing; 13) treat; 14) conversation