



# Build a Better Sleep

Eight simple steps can make your bedroom into the kind of place where you can get the good night's rest you so richly need and deserve.

by ELLEN MICHAUD

**1. HANG THICK DRAPES** Your brain is genetically programmed to wake when it senses light—whether it's the sun coming up early (especially in summer months), a streetlight, or even the flash of passing car headlights. Tightly close room-darkening drapes and there's a good chance you'll sleep through the night.

**2. USE BAMBOO** Not only is bamboo sustainably harvested, sheets made of it feel like silk and can wick away moisture that might disrupt your dreams. These are especially helpful for women who get night sweats associated with menopause. Try the super-comfy bamboo and cotton 300-thread-count bedding from The Company Store, online at [thecompanystore.com](http://thecompanystore.com). Queen flat and fitted sheets are \$44 each.

**3. BAN ELECTRONICS** Phones, TVs, laptops, and faxes don't belong in your room, says Dr. Mary Susan Esther, president of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. Just playing a game of computer solitaire before bed is enough to rev your brain and discourage it from pulling you toward deep sleep.

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#### 4. ADD A WORRY BOOK

Stress causes almost half of us to lose sleep every month, one survey shows. Instead of stewing, sit down before bed with a “worry book” and write down the problems of the day as well as potential solutions. They can be as wild and impractical as you like. Then put the worry book by the bedroom door and go to bed. When fretful thoughts pop into your mind, tell yourself you’ve done everything you possibly can tonight, and there are solutions waiting by the door to get started on in the morning. It really works.

#### 5. SET YOUR CLOCK

Make sure it goes off at the same time all week. Yes, that means weekends. Sleeping in for an hour or two on Sunday confuses your body’s clock and makes your sleep worse the rest of the week.

“If I had to pick one thing for better sleep it would be to wake up at the same time every day,” Esther says. Also, turn the clock away from you so its light doesn’t disturb you and so you aren’t tempted to clock-watch, which just worsens your insomnia.

#### 6. CLOSE THE PAJAMA DRAWER

You’ll improve your sleep if you leave your PJs in the drawer or dress as lightly as makes you feel comfortable. It’s easier to adjust body temperature when you can toss covers on or off bare legs or shoulders rather than struggling with nightwear.

#### 7. SLEEP AT 65 DEGREES

Lower temperatures help your body go into sleep mode for the night, but there’s no need to hike

the utility bill to keep it at those levels all day. A programmable thermostat (many are under \$50) from a home center such as Home Depot or Lowe’s can automatically change the temperature. Set it to adjust to 65 degrees a half-hour before bed. If you don’t want to cool the whole house in summer, get a portable air-conditioning unit, such as the Sunpentown SPT WA-1230E 12,000-BTU. It has a remote control so you don’t have to get out of bed in the middle of the night to adjust it. About \$380; [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).

#### 8. TRY, TRY AGAIN

If you don’t fall asleep within 30 minutes of turning out the light—or if you wake during the night—get up and read a novel for a while. Keep a room dark but still enjoy fatigue-free reading with the Zelco “itty-bitty” Book Light, Volume 2.

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## The matter of mattresses

Few things are as important to sleep as the right mattress. So we recruited sleepers willing to put their backs into it. These mattress picks were slept on for 3–6 months. Prices shown are for queen-sizes.

**TEMPUR-PEDIC** Tempur-Pedic mattresses are the only ones approved by the Arthritis Foundation, in part because of their ability to alleviate aches. And they come with a 20-year warranty. If you buy them directly from the manufacturer, you get a free 90-day in-home tryout. \$1,699 for the ClassicBed mattress, online at [tempurpedic.com](http://tempurpedic.com).

**BETTER HOMES AND GARDENS® HENBURY** We’re tooting our own horn here—for good reason. Better Homes and Gardens® launched its own brand of mattresses in February with Five Star

Mattress (a sister company of Serta). We tested the Henbury, available in firm, plush, or super pillow top. Its latex layer will also help you sleep cooler. Our tester gave up a beloved mattress to try ours but found she liked the Henbury better. \$1,299, [bhgmattress.com](http://bhgmattress.com).

**SOMNIUM OMNIFLEX** If you’ve ever slept on a European-style mattress, you may have found it harder than its North American counterparts. For many people, a firmer mattress is key to a good night’s rest. The new Somnium Omniflex is such a mattress. Made in Austria from a combination of plastic

springs (which don’t wear out) surrounded by eco-friendly foam, its novel design provides an astonishingly comfortable sleep. Available at B&B Italia stores or direct from the manufacturer. \$2,299, [somniaumbeds.com](http://somniaumbeds.com).

#### ISOTONIC ISO-COOL MATTRESS PAD

If there’s no money in the budget for a new mattress this year, stretch out the life of your old one with a good mattress pad. We liked the Isotonic Iso-Cool pad from The Company Store, which did an admirable job increasing the comfort level of a mattress that had

