

# Sleep Schedules & Wake Windows

Babies 0-36 Months

---

## FINDING A BABY'S UNIQUE SLEEP RHYTHM

I believe that each baby and family is unique and that there cannot be one perfect schedule for all babies. Before sharing the wake windows and sleep schedules that most sleep trainers use, I would like to share some background with you in hopes that you will read these schedules with an open mind.

How you can approach mom:

When they were pregnant they probably did not think they would need support with infant sleep. Remind them that they are not alone. So many mamas are asking the same questions as them. So, here are some questions for them: What was your identity before becoming a mother? What things did you enjoy doing? Did you typically have control over things on a day to day basis? How did you feel when you had the ability to easily control your day? Did you have trouble when you couldn't control situations?

Sarah Patterson, a psychotherapist, talks about how one of the biggest challenges when becoming a mom is losing control, and losing the person that you knew as yourself. As Sarah points out, "For a lot of women that really harsh transition from predictability and structure to none of it, then gets put on infant sleep...I noticed there was a connection between women who were feeling really anxious, overwhelmed and low and the need for their baby to sleep in a certain way... It is normal to have have lot of structure in your day before becoming a mom. It's okay if things aren't perfect. It's hard to predict your day with your little one and maintain that structure you may have lost. It's okay to worry, but try to look for the good things as well. Be kind to yourself as you have taken on a whole new role as a mother whether this is your first or fourth child. Having structure and being able to predict your day can make you feel better, but then... you bring a baby into the world and all that goes away. Not getting enough sleep can also be a challenge, thus why many mamas are looking for ways to control their infants sleep to bring about more structure and predictability into their day to day.

So, predictability can be a wonderful feeling and help you feel that you have gained control over your life with your little one. The thing is that every single child is different and there is no certain age in which they all have the exact same wake windows. You and I don't get the same amount of sleep, or go to bed at the same time. This variation of sleep is the same for night and day with adults and also our children... we are all different and all have different needs.

I don't want you to feel like a failure if your baby doesn't follow a very specific sleep schedule. Don't look at the schedules listed below and feel like you are failing. You are tired and doing your very best. I always say I wish our babies were born with a manual so we would know what they need. They aren't born with a manual so we have to work to create a manual that is specific that individual child.

As your baby grows their sleep needs will change. I believe it is important to remember this as parents and accept that each child is different and we can't always control their sleep. Being able to let go of the want to control your little one's sleep can help ease your stress and make each change in sleep just a little easier. Your baby regulates their emotions off of you. This means that if you are stressed they are stressed too and they many times will want to keep you even closer. Our babies feel our emotions and these emotions impact their responses.

I promise your baby will sleep! Trying to force a schedule on them won't bring about this sleep. Rather, you can focus on developing routines and reading your little one's unique tired cues and support them to sleep in the way that works best for them. Think about us as adults, some of us are really snuggly and love to have people close while others like to have their space. So, maybe you know of another baby who does just fine in their crib but yours will not do the crib. This might be because they love the snuggles and need some additional sleep associations to support them to sleep in the crib.

Your baby's sleep-wake homeostat and the circadian clock is what dictates when your baby sleeps. You can definitely create environments and daily routines to work on getting their circadian rhythm and sleep-wake homeostat on track. So, if you are spending a ton of time trying to get your baby down and it is frustrating you let go of the specific sleep/wake schedule and follow their cues instead to see what happens.

“Sleep is not a state that you should try to force a baby into. It's better to set conditions that allow sleep to overtake baby and that make self-settling and lengthy sleeping easier and more attractive to baby” (Sears 2005)

There can definitely be benefits to the sleep schedules and wake windows when you use them as a guide to find that just right balance for your little one. By using this as a guide and following their cues you can begin to develop a rhythm that works best for both of you and give you the predictability you might be longing for. So, take some time to log your baby's naps and bedtime making notations of when you are noticing tired cues. Collecting a week of data can help you transition into what works best for your unique baby.

Start with reflecting on your stress levels because remember your baby feels what you feel. Being aware of your feelings and going into naps and nighttime with less stress will lower your baby's stress and allow you to focus on finding the perfect rhythm for your family.

Next, I want to share the sleep schedules and wake windows that are recommended by sleep trainers and 'sleep science.' While looking through this remember to use it as a guide and know that you aren't failing if your baby doesn't follow them exactly. Allow these sleep schedules and wake windows to guide you to finding that perfect rhythm.

# SLEEP SCHEDULES

The following are the schedules often suggested by individuals who use sleep training. The window between naps are developed from 'sleep science'. The problem is that the nap lengths are typically not realistic. Remember every baby is different and requires different amounts of sleep. So, using these windows as a starting point can be helpful but then adjust them to meet the needs of your UNIQUE baby.

NOTE THAT BEFORE THE AGE OF 5 MONTHS, you will want to use wake windows only and will not be able to predict a full day of naps. Save this handout for the future.

## 5 MONTHS:

6:30 AM - Wake

8:30-10 AM - Nap #1

12:15-1:45 PM - Nap #2

4:00-4:30 - Nap #3

6:30 PM - Asleep

## 6 MONTHS

6:15 - Wake (earlier so you can fit in the three naps)

8:30-10 AM - Nap #1

12:30-2 PM - Nap #2

4:30-5 PM - Nap #3

7:15/7:30 - Asleep (many babies do better going to bed a little earlier)

## 7-8 MONTHS on 3 naps:

6:30 AM - Wake

9:15-10:30 AM - Nap #1

1-2:20 PM - Nap #2

4:45-5:15 PM - Nap #3

7 PM - Asleep

## 7-8 MONTHS on 2 naps:

6:30 AM - Wake

9:30-11:15 AM - Nap #1

2-4 PM - Nap #2

7 PM - Asleep

## 9 MONTHS:

6:30 AM - Wake

9:30-10:30 AM - Nap #1 (Cap it to protect nap #2)

1:50-3:30 PM - Nap #2

7 PM - Asleep

# SLEEP SCHEDULES BY AGE HANDOUT

## 10/11/12/13 MONTHS:

6:30 AM - Wake

9:30-10:30 AM - Nap #1 (Cap it to protect the second nap)

2:30-4 PM - Nap #2

7:15/7:30 PM - Asleep

## 15/16 MONTHS:

6:15 AM - Wake

9:30-10:30 AM - Nap #1

2:30-3:30 PM - Nap #2

7:30 PM - Asleep

## 18 MONTHS:

7 AM - Wake

12/12:15-2:30 PM - Nap

7:30 PM - Asleep

## 2 YEARS:

6:30 AM - Wake

1-2:30 PM - Nap (Cap it to protect bedtime)

7 PM - Asleep

You will want the nap about 6 hours after waking up

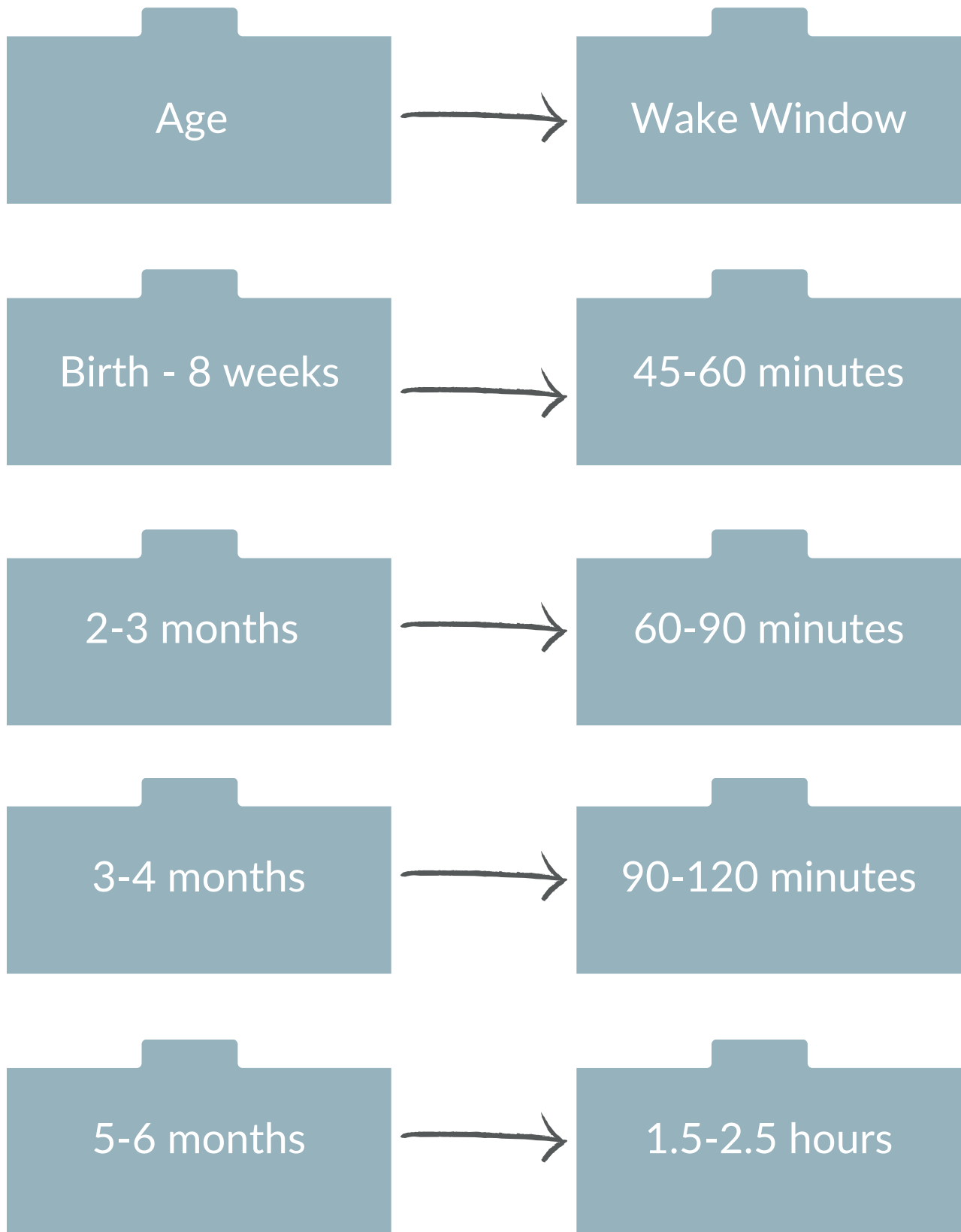
## 3 YEARS:

6 AM - Wake

1-2/2:30 - Nap

7:30 PM Asleep

# WAKE WINDOWS HANDOUT



# WAKE WINDOWS HANDOUT

Age	First Nap within	Other naps of the day
6 months	1.5-2 hours	2-2.5 hours
7 months	1.5-2 hours	2 hours 15 mins 2 hours 45 mins
8 months	2-2.5 hours	2.5-3 hours
9 months	2.5-3 hours	3-3.5 hours
10-12 months	2.5-3 hours	3-4 hours
12-15 months	3-3.5 hours	3-4.5 hours
15-24 months	4-6 hours	4.5-5 hours

# WAKE WINDOWS

Wake windows are the optimal period of time your baby is awake before needing to take another nap or go to bed for the night. It is important for you to watch for their tired cues because every baby is different. Signs of being tired can include a change in facial expression (relaxed to grimacing), staring into space or looking away, jerky or rigid movements, rubbing ears and eyes, clenching fists, and yawning. Once your baby starts to cry, is fussing, and unsettled you have missed the wake window. If they are overtired it may require a lot more parenting to sleep.

If you missed the perfect wake window using a carrier, stroller, or co-napping/bed-sharing are great options to help them settle as they will be wound up more as they likely reached their second wind. You may consider experimenting with a bedtime that is 20 minutes earlier (this is a starting place) if you are noticing late sleep signs. For some babies, yawning and eye rubbing are late tired cues.

Remember to use sleep science as a guide. Using a log to track your baby's sleep is the best way to find their perfect wake window. Keep track of the time that you put them down and the time they actually fall asleep. The amount of time from when they wake for the day or from a previous nap until the time they fall asleep again is their wake window.

If your baby is less than 4-month, they really only awake long enough for a feed, a diaper change, a quick hello and back to sleep.