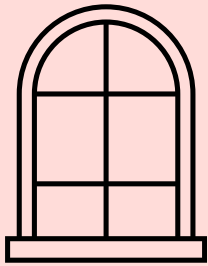
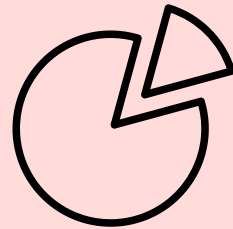




THIS IS
your guide to:



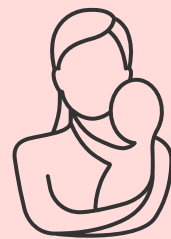
WAKE
WINDOWS



SLEEP BIOLOGY



SLEEP CUES



READING YOUR
BABY

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hey, you

Welcome! I wrote this guide to help ease your mind around your babe's sleep, and give your intuition a little fist bump.

There are many sleep 'rules' out there, but I want to let you in on (something that shouldn't be) a secret.

All babies have individual sleep needs, and generic wake windows & sleep schedules are likely not going to be the perfect fit for your kiddo.

There is no magic formula by age that will suit the sleep requirements for all babies across all cultures and parenting styles, so this is your permission to ditch the strict schedules and instead of following the clock, focus on tapping into your little one's cues and following their lead.

Are you now thinking 'but what does that meeeeeeaaan!?'...

Read on my friend.



what is a wake window?

A wake window is the period of time between your baby waking and the time they are next asleep. It doesn't matter where they are or what time of day it is - if they're awake, they're in the window.

Due to residual sleep pressure from the previous night, the first wake window is usually the shortest, and the window directly before bed the longest. If not, that's also OK and is just their normal (see what I mean about there not being any rules?!).

While wake windows can be a super helpful guide for some, take them with a pinch of salt because there is actually no evidence to recommend how long kids should be awake.

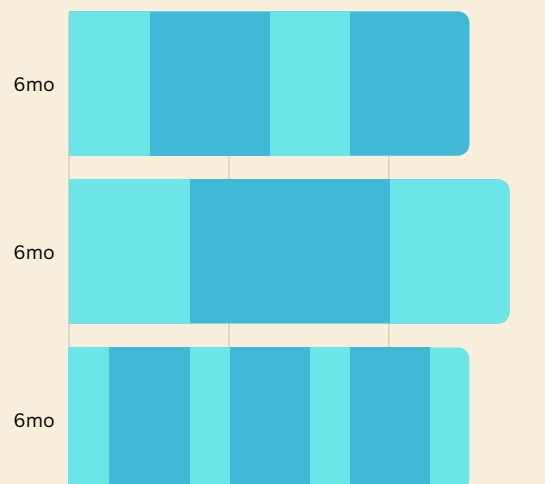
Age appropriate wake windows are based on anecdotal averages taken from various social groups, and depending on who you talk to, will be different. And like any averages, there are going to be lots of babies who fall outside the 'norm'.



Nap lengths can also influence wake windows, with kids who prefer short & frequent naps only releasing a little bit of pressure at a time, and those who like long naps needing more time to build pressure back up. There's no right or wrong, it's about finding your baby's natural rhythm.

EXAMPLES OF VARIATION IN NORMAL SLEEP/WAKE PATTERNS

ASLEEP
AWAKE





schedule or routine?

Babies thrive on routine. Having a flow to their day means the world is predictable and they feel safe. Routine is a loose but expected order of events based on your baby's readiness cues, whereas schedules tend to be arbitrary guidelines that dictate when your baby should eat, play and sleep based on the clock.

Research shows the effects of following prescriptive parenting books based on arbitrary guidelines is associated with heightened maternal anxiety, depression and feelings of failure.

Feeding on demand v's scheduled feeding is also recognised as best practice by leading health authorities such as the World Health Organisation, AAP and Raising Children Network.

Here are two examples of a 6mo schedule de-identified from Pinterest. They are notably different, with the example on the right suggesting 15 hours of total sleep which is right at the top end of average. It's important to remember that any schedule may not be right for you and cause unnecessary stress and anxiety.

Time	Activity
7am	Wake-up and feed (milk)
8am	Breakfast (solids)
10am	Feed (milk)
10.30am	Nap
11.30am	Wake-up. Offer
1pm	Milk feed
1.30pm	Nap
3.30pm	Wake-up and
4pm	Feed (milk)
6.45pm	Bath
7pm	Feed and bedtime
7.30pm	Bed
Night	Baby may still for a milk fe

Time	Activity
7:00am	Ideal wake up time
9:00am	Time for baby's first nap (1.5hrs)
12:30am	Time for baby's second nap (1 hr)
4:30pm	Time for baby's third nap (30 - 45 min)
6:00pm	Begin baby's bedtime routine
7:15pm	Bedtime

The good news is that tapping into when your baby is ready for sleep doesn't need a generic chart - it just needs you.



sleep biology 101

Knowing the 'why' behind sleep can help you lean into the flow and not die on the hill that is age appropriate wake windows.

Two of the big players that drive sleep are circadian rhythm and sleep pressure.

Circadian rhythm is the 24 hour sleep/wake body clock that develops by around 12 weeks of age when babies start to produce their own sleep hormone (melatonin). Once established, circadian rhythm is the gate that needs to open to achieve sleep.

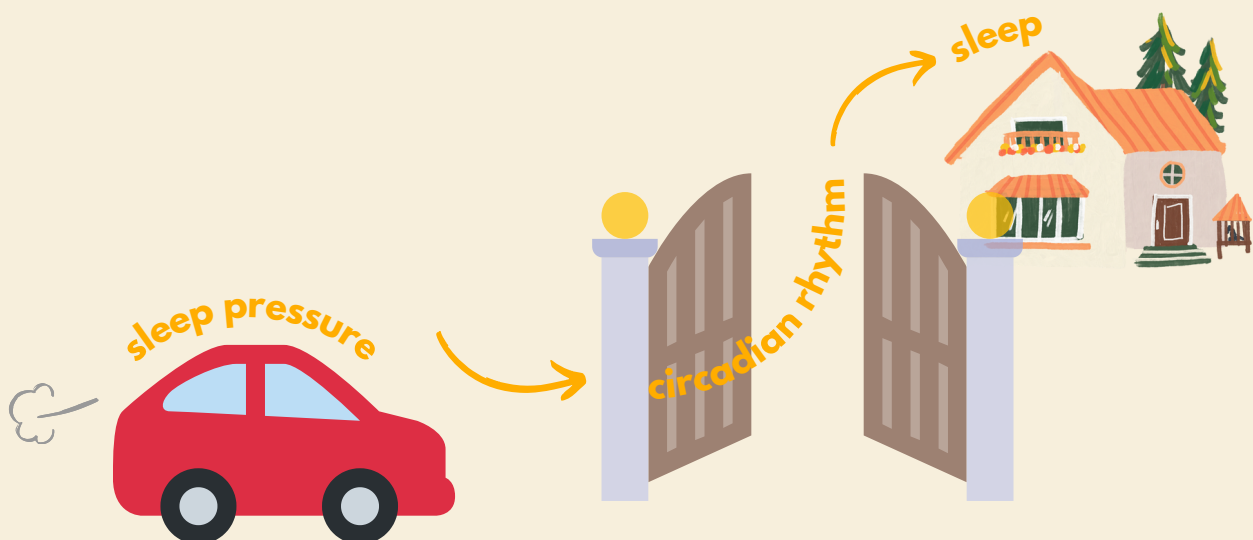
To then get through the gate, we

need enough gas in the tank.

Enter: sleep pressure.

Sleep pressure is a build up of the neurotransmitter adenosine, which acts as a nervous system depressant and inhibits processes that occur during wakefulness. So basically: sleepiness.

Adenosine levels rise when awake, and then once asleep the pressure releases and drops. Sensitivity to adenosine is individual, so the amount of time it takes to build sufficient sleep pressure will vary from person to person.





Sleep pressure is especially important for babies 3 months and under while their circadian rhythm is under construction. It's also the main driver of naps for all ages due to the trace amount of sleep hormones present during sunlight hours (yes this is why naps can be harder, and no biological nap windows aren't really a thing!).

If you're attempting to get your baby to sleep and they don't have enough sleep pressure on board, it can mean they're not tired enough to either fall asleep or stay sleep. And nobody got time for that!

sleep latency

Sleep onset latency is the amount of time it takes to fall asleep. It's important to note that studies on sleep latency have only been conducted in adult populations, but the findings indicate that the ideal window of time it takes to fall asleep is 15-20 minutes. Falling asleep in under 5 can indicate there's too much sleep pressure present, and over 25 mins can mean there's not enough. Don't waste hours of your life rocking, bouncing or feeding a baby to sleep that isn't ready. If you're no closer to sleep after 20-25 mins then hop out of the room, do a reset, and try again a little later. If bedtime consistently starts to push out (and you don't want it to!), it may be a good sign that it's time to experiment with extending your wake windows or reducing total sleep.

how much is enough?

Babies are pretty smart and will generally take the sleep they need. It is very rare to come across an infant who is clinically sleep deprived, and many of the studies used to illustrate the effects of sleep deprivation use data based on school aged children. If you answer yes to these:

- Forget the clock, do they look like they've had enough sleep?
- Are they social and wanting to interact?
- Are they having periods of being content?
- Are they hitting their milestones?


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Then you're likely good!



sleep totals

When we look at the recommended sleep totals by age in a 24 hour period (as per the updated [National Sleep Foundation's guidelines](#)), the difference in sleep requirements for babies on opposite ends of the spectrum is 8 hours. That's huge!



There are many babies who will sit right on the average amount of recommended sleep per 24 hour cycle, but with the huge variation in sleep needs there are also going to be many babies who are sleeping way more or less than 'average'.

It's for this reason that I find age based schedules one of the most misleading pieces of mainstream sleep advice, and where parents can run into trouble if they're made to feel there's something wrong with their parenting or their baby if they go rogue.

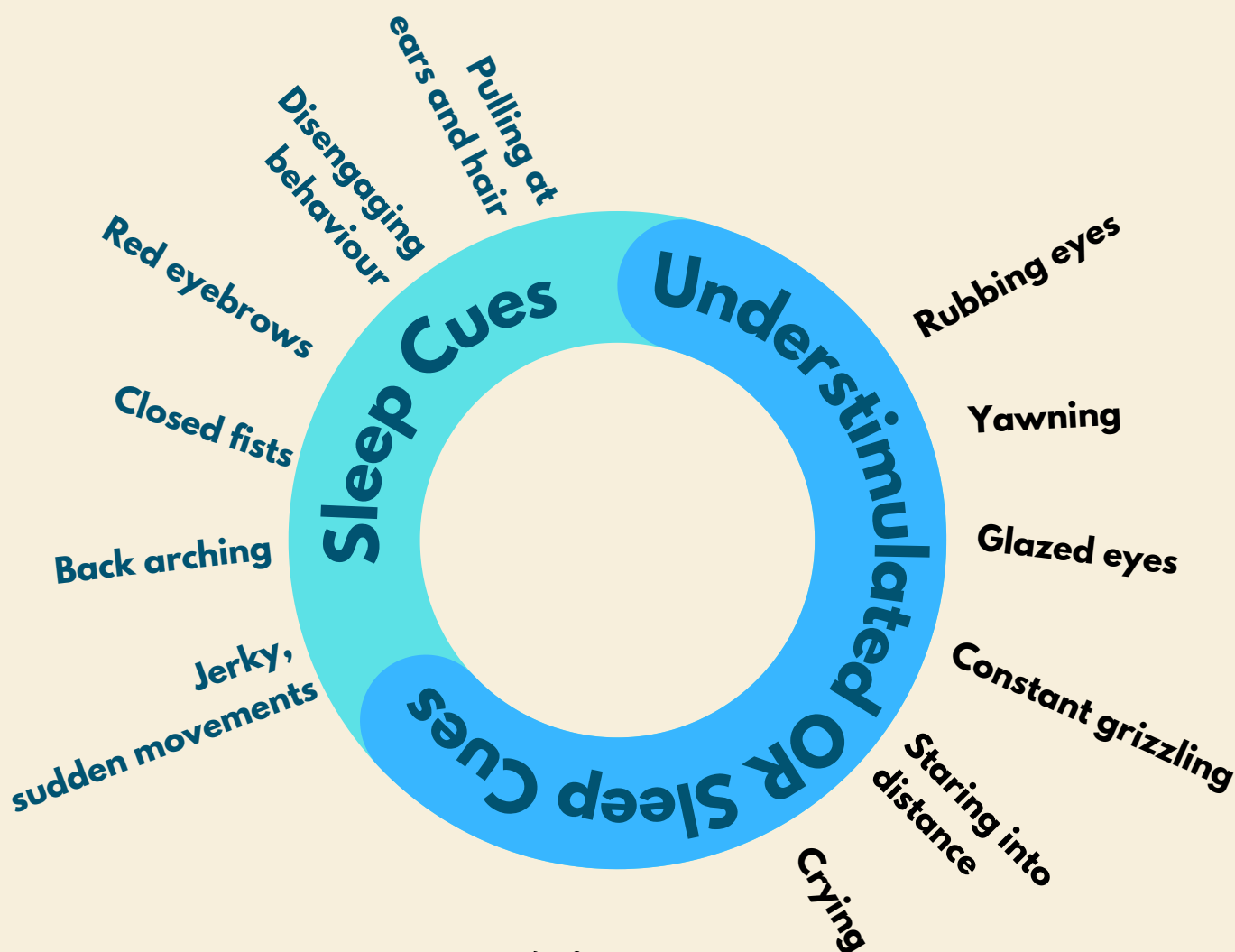


sleep cues

Instead of watching the clock, watch your baby.

Because our babes like to keep us on our toes, some will show really clear sleep cues whereas others don't tend to show any until they drop. And then to make things a little trickier, some cues can also be signs of under stimulation or boredom. Whaaat?!

All babies (but especially newborns) can be sensitive to the dysregulation that comes with being too tired, and tip into sensory overload. For younger babies, once you observe cues I would start by assuming they're tired and aim for a sleep. If you do observe sleep cues for low sleep needs or slightly older babes that may just be under-stimulation in disguise, you can experiment with a change of scene or a new interaction. If they don't perk up or they escalate, that's a sign it's time to wind down.





reading your baby

I say this with love, but don't overthink it.

Sleep isn't meant to be a scientific equation that you need to solve. It is an inbuilt biological function that can't be taught, and is designed to unfold when your baby is feeling supported and connected with a calm caregiver.

Humans wouldn't have continued to evolve if we were meant to live by the clock and sleep in a dark room. We are a carry species, which means above all else our young are programmed to constantly seek proximity. Your baby not wanting to be put down, or waking the minute they hit the bassinet isn't because you've held them too much. It is an appropriate response deeply imprinted in their brain, and is driven by thousands of years of evolution.

Instead of becoming hyper focused on the 'should's', try letting go and getting to know your baby's unique flow. Don't hesitate to offer connection while supporting your baby to sleep whenever and for as long as they need it, and if you receive unsolicited comments just remind yourself that babies can't be held too much or be too attached.

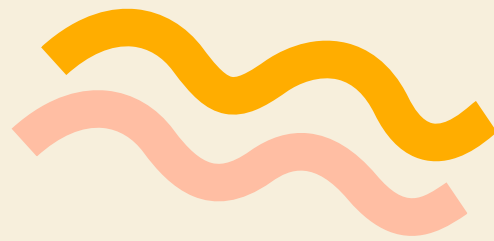
You know your little person better than the books, so try to lean into that intuition, listen to your gut and don't be afraid to experiment.

As always, if you need any support to nail down a challenge or get a big dose of reassurance, I'd love to work with you! :).

And lastly, my parting gift to you is a (rough!) guide to wake windows by age to get you started. Keep scrolling, girl! X



Wake Windows



0-6 MONTHS

AGE

WINDOW

Birth - 8 Weeks

45-60 minutes

2-3 Months

60-90 minutes

3-4 Months

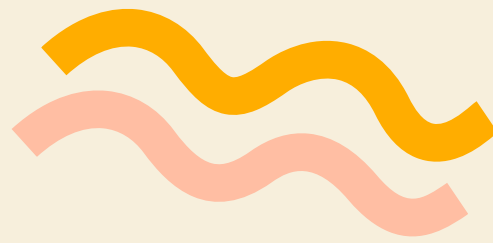
1.5-2 hours

5-6 Months

1.5-2.5 hours

Wake windows
increase on average by
15 mins every 3-4
weeks!

Wake Windows



6-24 MONTHS

AGE

FIRST WINDOW

LAST WINDOW

6 Months

1.5 - 2h

2 - 2.5h

7 Months

1.5 - 2.25h

2.25 - 2.75h

8 Months

2 - 2.5h

2.5 - 3h

9 Months

2.5 - 3h

3 - 3.5h

10-12m

2.5 - 3h

3 - 4h

12-15m

3 - 3.5h

3 - 4.5h

15-24m

4 - 6h

4.5 - 6h