

Need Advice from Night Owls on How to Get Up Early

Hello Sezzers,

I am a Night Owl, and I have gotten worse over the winter holidays. Any tips or tricks to get my butt out of bed earlier in the morning? I suppose you morning people can chime in too, if you have any tips other than going to bed before 10, because that just isn't going to happen.

I am more of a morning person than I used to be, but struggled with it for a long time. A couple of tricks come to mind: 1. Even if you hit the snooze button as a matter of reflex, turn a light on when you do it. It's much easier to stay in bed when it's dark. 2. Put your alarm across the room. If you have to get out of bed to turn it off, it makes it a lot easier to stay out of bed.

Finally, even though I am no longer a night owl, I still have my coffee on a timer so when I stumble out of bed it is ready and waiting for me.

Kevin Grierson, Virginia

If you love coffee (I love coffee), you can buy outstanding varietal coffee (from Peet's, for example) and use a quality coffee maker with a timer so that coffee is ready at or before the time your alarm goes off. Because really good coffee is at its best right when it's brewed, using this method provides the benefit of tormenting you with the smell of fresh coffee as you lie in bed, refusing to get up, knowing that the later you rise, the less delicious the coffee is going to be. The coffee is good but not great one hour later, and passable but not good an hour after that. You can also get up, drink the coffee and go back to bed, and when you wake up a half hour later, you are much more awake. (This is the idea behind "coffee naps.")

L. Maxwell Taylor, Vermont

I vary between being a morning and night person, although I am by nature more of a night person. I just go through stretches where I wake early for random reasons.

What I have found that helps with waking up early or transitioning to waking up early

1. Going to bed early does, unfortunately, help in waking up early.
2. Putting distractions (e.g. phone, iPad, Netflix, etc) in a separate room from where you sleep helps.
3. Working out in the evening helps me. Work out, shower, and then I fall asleep.
4. Once I am awake, I've found that eating a protein-heavy breakfast keeps me awake for some reason. So, more meat, less bread, I guess.

Although, the most effective way to wake up early, I think, is to have a dog who wakes you up at 6 AM wanting to go pee.

Andy I. Chen, California

I am a night owl as well. But the past several years I have had to adjust to rising before 6 am. My doctor says I have a condition commonly known as “small children” that has numerous side-effects. It has not been easy even considering that I get home not earlier than 8:30 pm each day after a full day of work and an always unforgettable round trip on New York City subway.

Even with all that it is still difficult to stop the dogs in my head from barking about the desire to stay up at least until the night talk show host monologue. But I have no choice and must be in bed before 10 pm or risk being sluggish the entire next day. Here are a few things that work for me interchangeably:

1. Part of having any kind of a habit is thinking you have a choice and this is what you choose. Because let's face it, being a night owl is awesome! And Seinfeld is never funnier than in reruns on some obscure cable channel sandwiched between the cooking and shopping networks. But every night I tell myself that I simply have no choice. I must go to bed or tomorrow I will despise myself as a human being.

2. If that does not work, I take a shot of an alcoholic beverage. My weapon of choice is a good single malt scotch. But cognac works just as well. Wine is not as good because of the volume and the time it would take to drink it that we do not have as busy professionals. Vodka only starts working after

- 3 or 4 shots so that is also not a good plan. I am trying to go to sleep, not end up on America's Most Wanted. So try a good cognac and see if it relaxes you just enough to make peace with checking out for the day.

3. Next level is Valerian Root. Works slower but a lot more fun. The dosage is usually two capsules but I find it an overkill. One works really well.

It relaxes you just enough to pass out. And after a while falling asleep earlier becomes sort of a habit. Bonus points if you get some seriously vivid dreams. Trust me, it's worth going to bed early.

4. Melatonin as the last resort is as far as I have researched without going into prescription territory. I have a bottle but have not tried it out yet. Not quite ready to pull that trigger. But will give it a spin soon.

I guess the point is figuring out just how bad you have to be in bed before ten and then making peace with it as a life choice. Because just waking up early in the morning after staying up late is taxing, both physically and mentally.

But regardless, for waking up many quirky alarm clocks have been developed with various degrees of success. All available online. I have seen one that rolls off your table on two wheels and begins to drive itself around the room in random patterns all while producing an obnoxious noise. So you have no choice but to get up and catch it. There is also one in a shape of a grenade requiring you to get up at least partially and apply significant degree of effort to throw it against the wall. There are also many others.

But the catch is always the same: after the novelty wears off you have to keep setting those things up on your night stand. And you may just not want to bother and opt out at some point. What currently works for me is a vibrating alarm with a plastic extension that looks like a small hot water bottle. The extension is lodged in between the mattress and the box spring at the head of the bed. Instead of producing a sound the alarm causes the extension to vibrate quite forcibly. So, you have to take your head off the pillow while not risking to wake anyone else up. It's a win-win.

Vlad Portnoy, New York

I dated a guy in college who had served in Viet Nam. He had a VERY loud military siren hooked up to an alarm clock. One second before the siren, his clock would click. He had to move really fast to prevent the siren from waking up everybody in his apartment building.

Marilou, a retired legal secretary who refused to sleep over because of that siren

I just embrace my night owl lifestyle. I get up at 7:30. I'm rarely in the office before 9 - and I live only 20 minutes from the office. I exercise after I get up. I'm one of the few at the gym. If I did get up earlier, it would be too crowded.

There are times when I have to get up early and I can do it. I suppose I could change then. But why?

Sterling L. DeRamus, Alabama

Reading at night may help you fall asleep earlier. Exercise in the daytime or early evening. No caffeine past noon.

Roger M. Rosen, California

If you use your phone as an alarm, there are apps that force you to do math problems or solve puzzles in order to turn it off, all while the alarm gets louder and louder. My wife wasn't a fan.

These days, I have toddlers. Toddlers have no snooze button (at least mine don't). So even though I usually go to bed around 12, there's no chance of sleeping in.

Marshall D. Chriswell, Pennsylvania

I don't fight it. I used to. I tried every trick. But the end result is, my brain does not activate until noon. And it's almost 9:30 tonight and I'm still firing on all cylinders. Unless I have court, my office opens at 11 and is open until at least 7 in the evening. Clients love not having to take off work to see me during the day. And I don't have to set an alarm clock. Having said that, I'm largely transactional, so early court appearances are rare.

Wendi Lawson See

An attorney I know would "practice" getting up early for a couple of weeks before an early a.m. court hearing. I could never get up for the practice days.

Veronica M. Schnidrig, Oregon

I've embraced my late owl lifestyle long ago. I've adjusted my world by starting my office hours one hour later and having nap time in the late afternoon when I get tired.

When I have to be in court by 9:00, I take melatonin to knock me out 5 hours earlier than normal.

The last time I had a normal sleep schedule was over 30 years ago in high school.

Paula J. McGill, Georgia

I am a Night Owl, and I have gotten worse over the winter holidays. Any tips or tricks to get my butt out of bed earlier in the morning? I suppose you morning people can chime in too, if you have any tips other than going to bed before 10, because that just isn't going to happen.

Yeah, I get that; for the better part of my adult life I couldn't go to bed before 11 PM, sometimes later.

But in '04 we had hurricanes and lost power for a week. It got dark about 8:30; granted we had flashlights but it's tough to read by flashlight and of course no TV, and not much on the radio. For that week I went to bed a 9 PM.

And, I felt BETTER when I got up; go to bed a bit after 9, wake up a bit before 6, full 8 hours + sleep.

Ever since then I go to bed at 9, unless I'm going out to see a movie or such on a weekend.

I really, really, do feel much better getting a full night's rest.

Ronald Jones, Florida

I could lend you my cat Sabrina. She's very good about meowing loud enough to wake the dead.

John Davidson, Pennsylvania

Many people with this problem have supposedly been helped by a "light alarm," like those made by Philips. They are designed to gradually and quietly increase the light in your room, purportedly to trigger your natural tendency to wake up. They're cheap enough that it's probably worth a shot.

Here's an example of a cheap one:

<https://www.amazon.com/instecho-Sunrise-Digital-Nature-Control/dp/B07GJKYWM8>

Erik Hammarlund, Massachusetts

The alarm across the room trick doesn't work anymore.

"Alexa, turn off alarm."

David Shulman, Florida

Light will help, including reducing the blue light at night.

I am definitely a night owl, and tend to go to bed late. My current bedroom is on the 2nd floor, with windows on 3 sides. It really helps. I get up with the sun. My daughter, also a night owl, has one of those light rising alarm clocks, and it has helped her to get up on time more consistently.

Reducing the blue light from screens at night has also helped. I have my Kindle (the most likely device for me to use at night) set to turn on its blue light screen at 9 pm, then turn off at 6 am. I find I fall asleep reading on my Kindle when I have that setting on, as opposed to staying up all hours reading when it isn't on. You can buy physical screens for your computer, and some may also have a setting that automatically turns on and off like the Kindle.

Cynthia V. Hall, Florida

There was some talk about this on the today show this morning.. and one thing they suggested was to cut off your exposure to 'blue light' at night (light emitted by TVs and devices), and expose yourself to sunlight as soon as you can in the morning. Apparently there are 'sunglasses' that are 'blue blocker' sunglasses, recommended by many sleep doctors. Still very easy to see the TV and devices, or even just read a book, but they block that nasty blue light. Both of these things (blue light, and sunlight) have to do with your natural production of melatonin. Speaking of melatonin,

hubby and I have been using melatonin to insure a better night's sleep. I find that I have far fewer issues with leg cramps at night, and I'm guessing it's because I sleep more soundly. We use the melatonin gummies... 1.5mg each. Some nights I take none, most nights I take 1, occasionally I take 2. Not sure why Vlad said this is a last resort; everything has risks, of course, but this seems fairly benign, based on what I've read.

Laurie Axinn Gienapp, Massachusetts

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XtDc_iJ-j-M

The above video talks about some common issues.

Darrell G. Stewart, Texas

I started moving my alarm clock up 5 minutes every work day. It is surprising how effective this strategy has been. I'm not always out of bed, but I'm definitely waking up earlier.

I am looking into getting an alarm clock with a light. I think that will be effective too.

Thanks for all of the tips. I have some early court appearances, and I want to do things like shower and eat breakfast before navigating traffic.

Corrine Bielejeski, California

Brookstone has an alarm clock with a light. Can't remember the name offhand, but it worked great at getting me up in the morning (until I got an Echo). Now, I just tell my Echo to set the alarm and it gets me up.

Mitchell P. Goldstein, Virginia

