

OK TO WAKE CLOCK

ALL THE DETAILS ON INTRODUCING AN
OK TO WAKE CLOCK TO YOUR CHILD

Let's start at the beginning of all the questions... **WHAT** is an OK to Wake Clock?

It is a tool that can be used for our new and growing toddlers to help understand when it is time for SLEEP and when it is time to get their day going! Think of it as a clock for kiddos who can't tell time yet! Just like you or I would look over in the middle of the night to take a quick peek at the clock on our bedside table (really just hoping we have LOTS MORE sleep coming our way), children may also wake in the night or early morning hours and wonder "What time is it? Is it time to wake up yet?". And for our littlest ones who do not quite know numbers just yet, we can use other indicators to let them know!

Ok to Wake Clocks come in MANY forms, and honestly I do not find that ONE specific version is significantly better than another. There are some with sheep, or cows, or just colors; some with stop lights or suns and moons. All of these are things that young children can begin to use as a CUE for something ELSE. (*See special note at the end for how to use a DIGITAL CLOCK AS AN OK TO WAKE CLOCK for our slightly older kiddos).

Again, while it truly doesn't matter *WHICH TYPE OF CLOCK* you choose for your child, I would ask you to be mindful of a couple of different things:

1) What color lights does your Clock display? Remember, anything with BLUE Light (green, purple, bright white), could negatively impact your child's natural melatonin levels and delay sleep. Look for clocks that have the capability of utilizing a RED Light (orange, yellow, warm white), to reduce any problems there.

2) Try not to pick a clock that is going to be HIGHLY distracting for your child. Yes, we need it to accomplish a couple of goals, but we do NOT need it to create a huge distraction from sleep. Keep it simple if possible.



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The next question: **WHY** would you need an Ok to Wake Clock?

Easy: to communicate with your child when it is time for sleep and time to be awake... without **YOU** having to be the one in the room to do it. For families who choose to sleep in separate sleep spaces, getting out of bed at 5:00AM to tell your kiddo it is actually **NOT** time to wake up, can feel like a herculean feat. Teaching your child **WHAT** the clock **DOES** and what it **MEANS**, can be a simple tool for all of you to get better and longer sleeps. The Clock sets the expectations around sleep and is easily understood by your child.

I recommend implementing an Ok to Wake Clock for families who struggle with Early Morning Wakings, Nap time battles or even bedtime and night sleep. It can be utilized for **ALL** sleeps in addition to using it down the road when your child drops their nap and you implement Quiet Time instead!



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As to **WHEN** you can introduce an Ok to Wake Clock to your child-- my suggestion is **EARLIER THAN YOU THINK**. I work with **MANY** 18 month old children who **EASILY** understand the concept of the clock and recommend using a clock from about that age until you find you just not need it anymore (either your child begins to sleep in longer naturally **OR** they learn how to read numbers/tell time and can use a **REGULAR CLOCK**).

Many families think that their little one is "too young" for this process, but our children begin to *understand* what we are saying and communicating **WAAAAAAAY** before they are able to repeat things back to us verbally. So even if they may not be able to tell you what the clock is **FOR**, they are likely able to understand what the clock is telling them!

Look for these clues:

- They look at the clock when you ask where it is
- They can point out different colors when you ask them
 - Ex: where is the red car?
- They understand other **CUES** like getting your bag ready to leave means "we are heading to the car"



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AND for the BIGGEST question of them all... **BUT HOW?** How do you start off using a clock and where to go from there!

1) **The PREP:** Before you even purchase a clock, you begin to draw your child's attention to simple cues in their every day lives. Things like:

- Stop Lights: "Green means go and Red means stop. "
- Stop Signs: "When it is RED we have to stop our car. "
- "See how when the dog gets tired he closes his eyes? Other animals do that to! Even me and you!"
- The sun is Up and Shining and telling our bodies to wake up! The Moon is coming out and telling our bodies to slow down!"

2) Once you have purchased your Ok to Wake Clock, wait a couple of days to put it into your child's bedroom. Use it in the living space for a day or two while you practice getting to know it and showing your child how it works.

- Practice showing your child what the colors mean as they engage with their toys and play.
- Example: You can show them how their toy cars STOP when the light turns red , or how it is Time to put their baby doll to sleep when the sun goes down.
- When you see your child begin to understand the relationship between the Clock and the coordinating behavior, then move on to the next step!



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3) Time to move it into your child's bedroom:

- I suggest picking an easy spot that your child can see but that isn't TOO close to your kiddo when they sleep. (Minimize distraction).
- Some children around the age of 2 will ask for a NIGHT LIGHT, and you can feel free to use your OK to WAKE Clock through the night as a night light. For our younger kiddos, do not feel the need to have the light run all night long, simply switch on in the MORNING or as needed per their wakings.
- Remember to review and COMMUNICATE what the clock is FOR.
 - X color means SLEEP/BED/REST
 - X color means you can get up it is time to play!
- IF and WHEN your child wakes up and is ready to get going, BUT IT IS NOT TIME FOR WAKING YET:
 - I recommend waiting a good 5-10 minutes to see if they can settle on their own.
 - IF they cannot, you can go into their room, and draw their attention to the CLOCK: "Red = Rest/Bed", etc. Continue with check ins as needed until they fall back asleep or reach their Designated Awake Time.

4) Create a DESIGNATED awake time:

- This is a time you feel comfortable keeping your child in their crib/bed til.
- I recommend that morning does not start until after 6am for any child. BUT you can find the time that feels best for you as a parent and family.
 - Please note, that it is NORMAL for some children to wake IN the 6 o'clock hour and that asking them to have a morning closer to 8 may be out of their body's natural rhythms.



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5) THE NEXT and BEST STEP: YOU GET TO CHEAT !

- This means that if you are trying to elongate your child's sleep, say in the early morning hours OR for nap time, you can cheat until your child starts to really understand the process and GET SOME WINS!
- Set your OK to WAKE clock at for the time they NORMALLY wake up, getting up at their standard waking time and giving them a BIG WIN!!!
 - Example: "Hooray! You slept until your clock turned GREEN! I bet all that sleep made your body feel strong and rested! You probably have enough energy for us to go to the park today!"
- Once they have had a couple days getting use to the clock, you can begin to move your child's clock a few minutes LATER every few days.
 - If they wake BEFORE it changes color, remember, give them a few minutes to see if they can settle, and then go draw their attention toward the clock once more: "The clock is red, which means we stay in bed. When it turns green you can start your morning!"
- Keep moving the clock LATER as they have more and more success until they begin to naturally sleep in later AND/OR are cooperative in their sleep space until it is time to get up!
 - Even if they aren't sleeping, if they are in their space being quiet, we will call that "Restful" and SUCCESSFUL!

6) IF your child continues to struggle for weeks on end even with the introduction of an OK to WAKE clock, it would likely be time to evaluate their schedule once more.

- Does my child have enough sleep pressure to reach these timing goals?
- Is my child overtired causing these wake times?
- Are my expectations realistic for my child's age group?



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FOR OUR OLDER CHILDREN WHO KNOW THEIR NUMBERS



For our older children who know their numbers or may already have a regular digital clock in their room (or in some long lost drawer), you can absolutely use that as an Ok to Wake Clock! Here is how:

1) Just cover up the Minutes part of the digital clock display with a post-it note or just tape a piece of paper OVER the minutes.

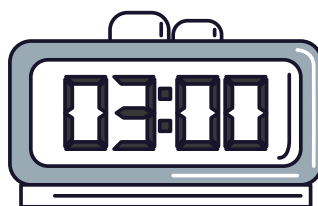
2) ON that piece of paper, draw in BIG BOLD LETTERS the number that you wish your child to "match".

- For example, if you are trying to get your child to wake up in the 6 O'Clock hour in the morning, then write a BIG 6 on the paper.
 - If you are shooting for a half-hour goal time, then you will just have to adjust the time on the clock to reflect a half hour adjustment because your child will not be able to see 6:30 due to the minutes portion being covered.

3) Communicate and explain to your child that when the Clock number MATCHES the paper number, THEN he or she knows it is morning time and can come out of their room! CELEBRATE!

4) Encourage your child to practice staying in bed until the numbers match by highlighting INTERNAL MOTIVATORS:

- "Do YOU feel well rested having stayed in bed this morning? I know I do!! I feel like I could go to the park to play today because I got extra rest!"



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