

Chapter 2

Start here *tonight*

Eight steps you can do today with what you already own. Don't aim for perfect – do as many as you can, in this order.

- 1 Choose tomorrow's wake-up time – and set the alarm now.**
Pick a time you can keep seven days a week. A fixed wake time is the single strongest signal to your body clock. Keep it even if tonight goes badly.
- 2 Have your last caffeine by noon; finish alcohol 3 hours before bed.**
Already past noon? No more caffeine today, and start the noon cutoff tomorrow. Or skip the drink tonight. Alcohol helps you fall asleep, then fragments the second half of the night and can trigger night sweats.
- 3 Cool the bedroom to 60–67°F (16–19°C).**
Turn the thermostat down an hour before bed, or open a window and aim a fan across the bed. Cooler than feels necessary is about right.
- 4 Remake the bed in layers.**
Take off the heavy comforter. Use a cotton sheet plus one or two light blankets you can push off one at a time, then pull back when the chill comes.
- 5 Build a bedside kit.**
Insulated cup of ice water, a fan within arm's reach, a spare sleep top, and a small towel. Lay a towel over your side of the sheet so you can peel it off instead of changing the bed.
- 6 Do a 10-minute Brain Download at least an hour before bed.**
On paper, write everything on your mind and one next step for each (worksheet on [page 39](#)). Close the notebook. The goal is to get it out of your head before your head is on the pillow.
- 7 Hide the clock and move your phone out of reach.**
Turn the clock to the wall and charge your phone across the room. Knowing it's 3:12 AM has never helped anyone fall back asleep.
- 8 Go to bed when you're sleepy, not when you're "supposed to."**
Sleepy means heavy eyelids and nodding off, not just worn out. If that's 30 minutes later than usual, good.

IF YOU WAKE IN THE NIGHT – THE SHORT VERSION

1. Cool down (covers off, sip cold water). **2. Don't check the time.** **3. Breathe slowly** – in for 4, out for 6 – for a few minutes. **4. If you're still wide awake after what feels like 20 minutes, get up**, sit somewhere dim with a book, and go back to bed when your eyes get heavy. The full wake-up protocol is on [page 20](#).

TOMORROW MORNING

Get up at your alarm, whatever kind of night you had, and get outside for 10–20 minutes of daylight within an hour of waking. That one habit starts setting up tomorrow night's sleep. If your problem is waking too early, read the exception on [page 11](#) first.