GoalTodo

Wake up early: move your alarm 15 minutes earlier every few days

Wake up early

4 weeks · Mon, Nov 30 → Sun, Dec 27

Week by week

Tick a box each time you do a session.

Nov 30–Dec 6
Week 1

One wake time, up on the first alarm

Set up

- [ ] Choose your wake time for weekdays: the time you get up now. Write down your target, 30 minutes earlier than that, and one thing you'll do with the extra time
- [ ] Set one alarm for the moment you'll get out of bed, not earlier, and put it across the room
- [ ] Get up when the alarm goes. No snooze ☐☐☐☐☐
- [ ] Get up no more than about an hour later than your weekday time. If you usually sleep in longer, get up 15 to 30 minutes earlier than last weekend and go to bed earlier to match ☐☐
- [ ] Get outside in daylight soon after you wake up ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
  up to 30 minutes

Done when: Your alarm is across the room, you've got up when it went on at least 4 of 5 weekdays, and your weekend wake time is within about an hour of it or earlier than last weekend's

Sticking point: The first 15 minutes to an hour after you get up can feel foggy. That's normal and it passes. Get moving and get into daylight, and don't judge the morning until you're up and about.

Dec 7–13
Week 2

15 minutes earlier, then 30

Shift

- [ ] Wake alarm 15 minutes earlier than your old time. Move lights-out 15 minutes earlier too, to keep the same time for sleep. If you're not sleeping enough, stay at last step's time instead ☐☐☐
- [ ] Wake alarm 30 minutes earlier than your old time, lights out 15 minutes earlier again. At the weekend, no more than about an hour later. This is your target wake time ☐☐☐☐
- [ ] Get outside in daylight soon after you wake up ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
  up to 30 minutes

Done when: You've got up on your alarm, and had lights out on time, on at least 5 of 7 days

Sticking point: The pull to snooze just once. Get straight up and moving, because the urge fades once you're on your feet. If you want to snooze most mornings, you probably need more sleep, so protect your lights-out time.

Dec 14–20
Week 3

Your new time, weekends too

Hold

- [ ] Up at your target wake time when the alarm goes ☐☐☐☐☐
- [ ] Up at the same time on the weekend, or no more than about an hour later ☐☐
- [ ] Outside in daylight soon after you wake, and moving in the first hour: a walk counts for both ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
  up to 30 minutes

Done when: You've been up at your new time on at least 5 of 7 mornings, and within an hour of it on both weekend days

Sticking point: The weekend lie-in. Sleeping in pushes your body clock later, and Monday becomes the hardest morning of the week. If you're tired at the weekend, go to bed earlier rather than getting up later.

Dec 21–27
Week 4

Your plan for hard mornings

Make it yours

- [ ] Up at your wake time, then outside in daylight ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
- [ ] Write down your wake time, your lights-out time, what you get up for, and what you'll do after a late night: stay within about an hour of your usual time and go to bed earlier that evening ☐

Done when: You've been up at your new time on at least 5 of 7 mornings, and written down how you'll keep going to three months

Milestones

Mon, Nov 30	Set one wake time for weekdays
Sun, Dec 6	Up on time most mornings for a week
Tue, Dec 29	Most mornings for a month
Sat, Feb 27	Most mornings for three months

How the plan works

You fix your wake time first, and your bedtime follows. Getting up at the same time every morning is what anchors your body clock. Move that time earlier and, over the next few days, you start feeling sleepy earlier too.

Week 1 doesn't move your weekday time. You set one wake time for weekdays, the time you get up now, put a single alarm across the room, and practise getting up the moment it goes. Getting up on the first alarm is the skill the rest of the plan depends on. At the weekend, aim for no more than about an hour later than your weekday time. If you usually sleep in much longer than that, don't close the gap in one go: bring your weekend wake time 15 to 30 minutes earlier each weekend, with an earlier bedtime to match, until it's within about an hour.

Then every three or four days, your wake alarm moves 15 minutes earlier. Monday to Wednesday is one step, Thursday to Sunday the next. Lights-out moves 15 minutes earlier with it, so you keep the same time

for sleep. That doesn't guarantee you'll fall asleep 15 minutes earlier straight away: it can take a few nights. If you're not getting enough sleep, stay on the step you're on, or go back one, until you are. Small steps are easier for your body to follow than one big jump.

Every morning, get outside in daylight soon after you wake, for up to 30 minutes if you can, and get moving. Morning light helps your body clock shift earlier, and moving helps you resist going back to bed.

Most mornings means at least 5 of 7. A morning counts when you get out of bed on that day's alarm, without snoozing. The milestones count from the first day of week 1: setting your wake time is day 1, a week of mornings on time is day 7, then a month and three months.

Which level to pick

Pick the level that matches the gap between when you get up now on a normal weekday and when you want to get up.

- I want to wake 30 minutes earlier: 4 weeks. Set up, two steps in week 2, then you hold.
- I want to wake an hour earlier: 6 weeks. Four steps over weeks 2 and 3, then three weeks to make the new time stick.
- I want to wake two hours earlier: 8 weeks, with a hold week in the middle to let the new time settle.

If your gap falls between two levels, pick the longer one and stop shifting once you reach your own target: make the last step smaller if needed, then keep your own wake and lights-out times for the remaining weeks. If you want to wake more than two hours earlier, add one week of two steps for each extra half hour, and a hold week after each extra hour, before the final weeks. Going slower than the plan is fine. Going faster usually means lying awake at night and dragging in the morning.

Your bedtime has to move too. This plan is written for adults, and experts recommend that adults sleep between 7 and 9 hours a night. That means 7 to 9 hours actually asleep, not just in bed, so set your lights-out time far enough before your new wake time to leave room for falling asleep too. If that bedtime is a big change for you, the Be asleep by 11 plan covers the evening side in more detail.

Before you start

Waking up early only works if you still sleep enough. Adults are recommended 7 to 9 hours of sleep a night, and time in bed isn't the same as time asleep. Give yourself enough time in bed for that much sleep, plus the time it takes you to drop off. Moving lights-out earlier doesn't mean you'll fall asleep earlier straight away. If you're getting less sleep than you need, stop moving your alarm: stay on your current step, or go back one, until you're sleeping enough again.

See a GP or doctor if:

- you've followed the plan for several weeks and getting up is still a struggle most mornings
- you feel groggy for much of the day, or wake up exhausted, even when you've had 7 to 9 hours of sleep
- you're tired all the time, can't explain why, and it's been going on for a while without getting better
- you find you need to snooze again and again every morning. That can be a sign of not enough sleep, or of a sleep disorder
- someone has noticed your breathing stop and start while you sleep, or you make gasping, snorting or choking noises, or snore loudly. These are signs of sleep apnoea, which needs treating
- you can't fall asleep until very late and can't get up in the morning, however hard you try. This can be a body-clock condition called delayed sleep phase syndrome, which a doctor can help with

This plan doesn't use sleeping pills, melatonin or other supplements. Don't take anything for your sleep without checking with your doctor first.

If you work shifts, this plan isn't built for you. Talk to your doctor about how to sleep around your shifts.

You may feel foggy for a while after waking, especially in the first weeks. Don't drive or do anything risky until you feel properly awake.

What you need

▪ One alarm, across the room. Set it for the time you'll actually get out of bed, not half an hour before. Having to stand up to turn it off is the point.

▪ A reason to get up. Something you'll do with the new time that you look forward to: a walk, a proper breakfast, reading, exercise, a call, or a project you never have time for. Get it ready the night before.

▪ A way into daylight. A walk, breakfast by a bright window or on a doorstep, or a few minutes outside before your commute.

▪ Curtains you can open straight away, and a dark bedroom at night.

▪ A note of your times where you'll see it: this week's wake time and lights-out time.

Common mistakes

▪ Jumping straight to the new time. Setting the alarm two hours early overnight usually means a week of exhausted mornings and giving up. Move 15 minutes at a time.

▪ Moving the alarm but not the bedtime. Getting up earlier on less sleep doesn't last. Lights-out moves with every step.

▪ Snoozing. Several alarms before the real one break up the last part of your sleep and make getting up harder. One alarm, set for the time you get up.

▪ Staying in bed with your phone. Get up, open the curtains and get moving. Changing out of your night clothes and making the bed makes it harder to climb back in.

▪ Sleeping in at the weekend. It pushes your body clock later, and Monday feels like starting again. Stay within about an hour of your weekday time.

▪ Judging the day by the first half hour. Grogginess after waking is normal and usually lifts within 15 minutes to an hour.

▪ Long naps to catch up. If you need one, keep it to 20 minutes, earlier in the afternoon.

▪ Getting up early with nothing to get up for. Without a reason, early mornings turn into extra phone time. Decide what the time is for.

Keeping it up to three months

After the last week there are no new tasks. Keep three things going:

▪ One wake time, every day. Weekends within about an hour of it.

▪ Daylight and movement soon after you wake. Both keep your body clock where you've put it.

▪ A plan for late nights. After a late night, stay within about an hour of your usual wake time rather than sleeping in, and go to bed a little earlier that evening. If getting up then would leave you far short of sleep, take the extra hour and be back at your usual time the next day. Don't make up for it with a long nap.

If your wake time slips later, say after a holiday, an illness or a run of late nights, take the 15-minute steps again from wherever you are now.

If you've kept to the plan for several weeks and mornings are still a struggle, or you feel tired most days despite enough sleep, see your doctor.

If you fall behind

Missed 1 week: A week of missed alarms or lie-ins? Repeat that week at the same times. Keep your wake time as steady as you can, even after a late night, and don't nap to catch up.

Missed 2 weeks: Go back one step, to the wake time you last kept on most mornings, and move lights-out back to match. Build up again 15 minutes every three or four days from there.

Missed 3 weeks: Check when you actually get up now, and start again at week 1 of the level that matches the gap. Before you start, look at what got in the way, such as late nights, a phone by the bed or nothing to get up for, and change it.

Missed 4 or more weeks: Start again at week 1 of the level that matches the gap now. If you kept to the plan and still couldn't get up, or you feel tired most days despite enough sleep, talk to your doctor before you start again.

Sources

Sleep Foundation
`https://www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-hygiene/how-to-wake-up-early`
“Gradually shifting your bedtime and wake time by 15 to 30 minutes can help your body adjust to an earlier schedule more comfortably than making a sudden change.”

Sleep Foundation
`https://www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-hygiene/how-to-wake-up-early`
“Bright light exposure in the morning can also help shift a person’s sleep schedule, making sleep and wake times earlier.”

Sleep Foundation
`https://www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-hygiene/how-to-wake-up-early`
“If you’ve tried these tips and waking up when you need to is still difficult, you might want to talk to your doctor.”

Cleveland Clinic
`https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/14295-delayed-sleep-phase-syndrome-dsps`
“Adjusting your sleeping schedule works by anchoring your wake-up time.”

Cleveland Clinic
`https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/14295-delayed-sleep-phase-syndrome-dsps`
“The focus is to advance your wake-up time, which then advances your sleep onset at bedtime.”

Cleveland Clinic
`https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/14295-delayed-sleep-phase-syndrome-dsps`
“An alternative approach your provider might suggest is to get 30 minutes of sun exposure outdoors after waking up.”

Cleveland Clinic Newsroom
`https://newsroom.clevelandclinic.org/2026/03/23/is-it-ok-to-snooze-your-alarm`
“When it comes to an alarm, it’s best to set it for the time you actually need to get out of bed.”

Cleveland Clinic Newsroom
`https://newsroom.clevelandclinic.org/2026/03/23/is-it-ok-to-snooze-your-alarm`
“Getting yourself moving when you first wake up can help with the urge to keep hitting snooze.”

Cleveland Clinic Newsroom
`https://newsroom.clevelandclinic.org/2026/03/23/is-it-ok-to-snooze-your-alarm`
“If you’re still struggling to get out of bed every morning, you may simply not be getting enough sleep or have an underlying sleep disorder.”

Cleveland Clinic
`https://health.clevelandclinic.org/sleep-inertia`
“Sleep inertia usually lasts anywhere from 15 to 60 minutes.”

Cleveland Clinic
`https://health.clevelandclinic.org/sleep-inertia`

“If you tend to hit snooze without realizing it, try moving your alarm to the other side of the room so it takes more effort to turn it off.”

Cleveland Clinic
`https://health.clevelandclinic.org/sleep-inertia`
“It’s also worth the trip if you struggle with extended periods of sleep inertia, regardless of the amount or quality of sleep you’re getting.”

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NIH)
`https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/sleep-deprivation/healthy-sleep-habits`
“Try to keep the same sleep schedule on weeknights and weekends. Limit the difference to no more than about an hour.”

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NIH)
`https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/sleep-deprivation/healthy-sleep-habits`
“Use the hour before bed for quiet time.”

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NIH)
`https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/sleep-deprivation/healthy-sleep-habits`
“Adults should nap for no more than 20 minutes.”

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NIH)
`https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/sleep/how-much-sleep`
“Experts recommend that adults sleep between 7 and 9 hours a night.”

NHS
`https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/tiredness-and-fatigue/`
“But if you cannot explain why you're tired and it's been going on for a while and not getting any better, it may be a sign of a medical condition.”

NHS
`https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/obstructive-sleep-apnoea/`
“Sleep apnoea is when your breathing stops and starts while you sleep.”

NHS
`https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/obstructive-sleep-apnoea/`
“Sleep apnoea needs to be treated because it can lead to more serious problems.”

This plan online	`https://goaltodo.com/wake-up-early`
Reach it with others on Welang	`https://welang.com/goals/wake-up-early`
Reach it on your own in HourLife	`https://www.hourlife.com`

This plan is a guide, not medical advice. See a doctor before starting if you have a health condition, are pregnant, or haven't exercised in a long time.