

# Your Evening Shut Down Routine

Sleep does not arrive on command. It arrives when the body and mind have been given permission to let go. This guide walks you through a four-step evening routine designed to help you transition out of work mode and into genuine rest. Each step is simple, takes only a few minutes, and builds on the one before it. Whether you are a busy professional finishing a long day or a parent finally finding a quiet moment, this routine meets you where you are.



# Why a Shut Down Routine Helps

One of the most common reasons people struggle to fall asleep is simple: the body is still in work mode. The nervous system does not automatically switch gears the moment you close your laptop or put down your phone. Stress hormones like cortisol can remain elevated for hours after a demanding day, keeping your brain alert and scanning for the next task. Your body is still operating as though something important needs to be done.

A shut down routine works by introducing a series of consistent, low-demand signals that tell your nervous system the shift is over. When you repeat the same sequence each evening, your brain begins to associate those actions with the approach of sleep. Over time, even the first step in the routine can begin to produce a sense of calm. It is not about forcing relaxation. It is about removing the obstacles that are standing between you and it.

Research consistently shows that predictable pre-sleep behavior reduces the time it takes to fall asleep and improves sleep quality. The reason is rooted in how the brain handles anticipation. When a sequence of actions reliably precedes sleep, the brain begins preparing for rest before you even get into bed. Your heart rate starts to slow. Melatonin production increases. Muscle tension begins to release. The routine does not create sleep. It creates the conditions for sleep to find you.

## Why Routines Work

- Signals the nervous system to downshift
- Reduces lingering cortisol levels
- Trains the brain to anticipate rest
- Shortens the time needed to fall asleep
- Improves overall sleep quality over time

# Step 1: Lower the Stimulation

STEP 1 OF 4

The first step is environmental. Before anything else, reduce the sensory input reaching your brain. Bright light, noise, and the constant pull of scrolling all keep the brain in a reactive, alert state. Lowering stimulation is not about deprivation. It is about creating a quieter container for the evening to unfold in.

Begin by dimming the lights in whatever room you are in. Bright overhead lighting tells your brain it is still daytime and suppresses melatonin production. A softer, warmer light source creates a visual cue that the day is winding down. If you have young children or live in a busy household, even one room with dimmer light can serve as your transition space.

## Dim the Lights

Switch to lamps, lower overhead brightness, or use a warm-toned bulb. Reducing blue light exposure in the final hour supports your body's natural melatonin rise.

## Lower the Noise

Turn off background television, reduce music volume, or step into a quieter space. Auditory stimulation keeps the brain engaged even when you think you are relaxing.

## Put the Phone Away

Set the phone face down or in another room. Reduce or stop scrolling at least 30 minutes before bed. Every notification is a small activation event for the brain.

## Avoid New Tasks

Resist the urge to start something new, reply to a final email, or

