HOW TO

Move Your Toddler to a Big Kid Bed

THE PARENT PLAY BOOK

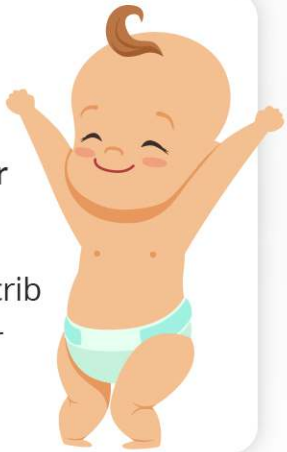
It's always so exciting when your little one is ready for their next big step – crawling, walking, ditching the diapers – and (gasp!) moving up to their toddler or 'big kid' bed. Sometimes these giant leaps in their development can cause disruptions in other areas of their little lives, namely sleep. So, **how do you manage this transition with the least disruption possible?**

When

- The minimum age that **we recommend making the move is 2** –preferably closer to 3 years old.
- **Prioritize their developmental readiness,** their maturity, and their ability to control their impulses.
- **Consider making this move if your toddler has outgrown their crib** (they're approaching or taller than about 3 feet) or there's a safety concern, i.e. your toddler is climbing out of their crib. *

*But First!

- **Lower the mattress all the way down;** and switch to sleep sacks. Sleep sacks help contain legs and feet to provide resistance against climbing.
- If you have a crib where one side is higher than the other, **turn the crib so the lower side is against the wall –** making it difficult for your toddler to climb out.
- **Avoid moving your toddler into their bed** simply because you need to free up the crib for a new baby. Borrow or buy a new crib and focus on keeping your toddler in their crib until they're developmentally ready to move out of it.



What

What sleep surface should you consider moving your toddler to?

- **Toddler bed –** These often come in fun shapes and colours.
- **'Adult bed' (e.g. twin) –** this can avoid two transitions – first from crib to toddler bed, and then from toddler bed to 'adult bed'.
- **Mattress on the floor.** A great option for young toddlers, or for families who are following a Montessori lifestyle.

Where

The most important consideration is to make sure to toddler-proof your little one's bedroom.

Make sure you've done the following:

- The bed is as low to the ground as possible
- Their mattress is tightly fitting into the bed frame so there are no gaps to get stuck
- The bed is at least 12 inches away from the wall on all sides
- The bed has a side rail to prevent falls
- All electrical outlets are safety-covered
- Windows and sliding doors have child-proof locks
- Furniture is tethered to the walls
- Choking hazards are out of the way
- Blind or shade cords are eliminated (they are a strangulation hazard)
- Install a child gate at the bedroom door and at the top of any stairs they might have access to – a very important safety measure. Leaving the room can be dangerous.

How

- **Set up realistic expectations for this change** and have some coping mechanisms in place that make sense for your family.
- **Get them excited!** "Wow, you're so big, you're growing out of your crib and need to go into a bed now. I'm so excited for you! You'll be so cozy and comfy in there." Keep this in balance, though – not too much playing this up, or you may cause more anxiety.
- This should be a change that's happening with them, not to them. **Involve them in the preparations** by planning a shopping trip to pick out fun new sheets.
- **Include their favorite "lovey".** 'Bunny is going to love his new bed too!'
- **Have a 'big reveal'** once the bed is ready, versus watching the break down of the crib.

Keep up all your good sleep habits – your consistent bedtime routine and your perfectly sleep-conducive bedroom environment (dark, cool, calm and quiet with continuous noise).

The best approach to itchy feet is to wordlessly keep walking them back into bed. **Fair warning:** you might be doing this a lot at first.

In the morning, if you've had success give them lots of praise (or even a small reward) if they've made steps toward staying in their bed.

This transition can take a couple of weeks. So, commit to giving it time, patience and consistency and you'll get there.