

Gentle Sounds Improve Baby's Sleep

By Elizabeth Pantley, author of *The No-Cry Sleep Solution*

The environment that your baby enjoyed in the womb was not absolutely quiet. There was a constant symphony of sound. (Remember the whooshing sounds you heard with the Doppler stethoscope?) Due to this prenatal history, white noise or soft music can help babies relax and fall asleep. This is because these sounds create an environment more familiar to your baby than a quiet room. The level and type of noise that disrupts sleep is different for each child. Some children can sleep through an alarm siren, others are awakened by the slightest noise. No matter what kind of sleeper your child is, white noise or soft music can be helpful in three ways. First, the gentle sound can be effective at soothing a child to sleep. Second, it can filter out noises that jar her awake – sounds from siblings, dishes clinking, television, or a dog barking. Third, it creates a consistent cue for sleep.



Choosing Bedtime Music

Many people use music as their baby's sleeptime sound. If you do, choose bedtime music carefully. Some music (including jazz and much classical music) is too complex and stimulating for sleep. For music to be soothing to your baby, pick simple, repetitive, predictable music, like traditional lullabies. Compositions created especially for putting babies to sleep are great choices. Pick something that you will enjoy listening to night after night, too.

Sounds and White Noise

There are widely available, and very lovely, nature sounds recordings that work nicely for baby-soothing, as well as small sound-generating or white-noise devices and clocks. The sounds on these—raindrops, a bubbling brook or running water—often are similar to those sounds your baby heard before birth. A ticking clock and a bubbling fish tank also make wonderful white-noise options.

You can find some suitable recordings made especially for babies, or those made for adults

to listen to when they want to relax. Whatever you choose, listen to it first and ask yourself: Does this relax me? Would it make me feel sleepy if I listened to it in bed?

If you must put your baby to sleep in a noisy, active house full of people, keeping the sound or music running will help mask baby-waking noises. White noise can also help transition your sleepy baby from a noisy daytime house to which he's become accustomed subconsciously to one of absolute nighttime quiet.

Midnight Awakenings

Once your baby is familiar with his calming noise or lullaby music, you can use these to help your baby fall back to sleep when he wakes up in the middle of the night. Simply soothe him by playing the music (very quietly) during the calming and falling-asleep routine. If he wakes in the night, turn the music on again.

Traveling Sounds

If your baby gets used to his sleep time sounds you can take advantage of this and take the music or

sounds with you if you will be away from home for naptime or bedtime. The familiarity of these sounds will help your baby sleep in an unfamiliar environment.

Changing Routines

Eventually your baby will rely on this technique less and less to fall and stay asleep. Don't feel you must rush the process; there is no harm in your child falling asleep to these gentle sounds—even adults can use this idea to successfully solve their own sleep problems. When you are ready to wean your child of sleep-sounds you can help this process along by reducing the volume by a small amount every night until you finally don't turn the music or sounds on at all.

Babies enjoy these peaceful sounds, and they are just one more piece in the puzzle that helps you to help your baby sleep—gently, without any crying at all.

