

A Grandparent's Guide to Sleepover Visits

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Sleepovers give grandparents and grandchildren a chance to spend more time together and deepen their relationships. Extended visits also teach children about becoming independent while their parents enjoy a date night or just a little extra sleep.

While it's usually a lot of fun, there can be some obstacles to overcome.

Grandchildren may feel homesick in an unfamiliar setting. Grandparents may be out of practice when it comes to dealing with picky eating or enforcing bedtimes.

Make your sleepovers safe and successful. Use these tips to plan visits that will delight the whole family.

Tips for Staying Calm and Healthy:

- 1. Coordinate rules.** Consistency is reassuring, so **it helps if grandparents and parents agree on the major rules and rituals.** You may decide to turn off all electronic devices well before bedtime or you may discover that your grandchild relies on a special soundtrack to lull them to sleep.
- 2. Budget extra time.** Routine tasks may take longer to complete when children are away from home. Start preparing for bedtime a little earlier than usual if you want to stay on schedule. Lay out clothing the night before to make it easier to dress in the morning.
- 3. Arrange sleeping.** What can you do when you have more grandchildren than guest rooms? Older kids will probably love the novelty of camping out with a

comforter on the living room floor or a tent in the backyard. Infants and toddlers will need age-appropriate cribs or bed rails.

4. **Provide comfort.** Guests of any age will appreciate thoughtful amenities to enhance their stay. **Clear off a few shelves or closet space for their ongoing use.** Set out a variety of toys and games suited to their interests or ask them to bring their favorite stuffed animals and other objects from home.
5. **Cook together.** There are plenty of nutritious meals and snacks that can be prepared in less time than it takes to order a pizza. Design your own custom burrito bar with beans, salsa, and chopped tomatoes and peppers.
6. **Serve breakfast.** Start your morning with a hearty meal. Most children will love egg and tomato sandwiches accompanied by homemade fruit popsicles.

Tips for Having Fun:

1. **Burn energy. Vigorous physical activity early in the day will help your grandchildren sleep at night.** Even more importantly, strong exercise habits will enhance their overall development. Attend a community yoga class together or install a basketball hoop in your driveway.
2. **Read stories.** On the other hand, **quiet activities will help your grandchildren to settle down in the evening.** Depending on their ages, you can take turns reading to each other before bed. Borrow books from your local library or build your own collection at home.
3. **Take pictures.** Break out your camera. Taking pictures will give you and your grandchildren a memento to enjoy in between visits. You can also send the images to their parents right away in case they have any concerns about how things are going in their absence.

4. **Pick a theme. Turn your visit into a party by giving it a theme.** It can be as simple as a movie night with popcorn or as elaborate as an all-day celebration with meals, games, and decorations.

5. **Be patient.** Each child develops differently, so a successful visit will match their needs. Maybe they'll be eager to spend the night or maybe you'll need to practice by staying over at their house until they're ready to come home with you.

Grandchildren will love sleepover visits when you make them feel welcome and secure. **Enjoy your time together and create beautiful memories** that you will treasure for the rest of your life.