

The COTSS Method

(Creating Opportunities To Self-Soothe)
for the first three months

The following steps show you how to give your baby the opportunity to learn self-soothing skills around sleep time.

1. Start slowing and calming your activity around your baby as sleep time approaches.
2. Check that your baby's needs have been taken care of (clean nappy, fed, burped etc.).
3. Take your baby to her sleep room.
4. Wrap her.
5. Give your baby her sleep aid if she has one (e.g. dummy).
6. Cuddle your baby in your arms, rock/sway/pat gently until she is very calm and or drowsy.
7. Say, 'Ssh - it's sleep time,' or whatever else you like (a short lullaby for example).
8. Put her down in the cot awake but almost asleep.
9. You can pat or rub your baby on the back for a little while if you want, and repeat your sleep words or song.
10. Leave your baby to see if she can settle to sleep on her own. Notice what she does as she gets ready for sleep. Is she showing signs of self-soothing?
11. If your baby cries, you can try to settle her with some more patting, rocking and calming words while she is in her bed.

If the crying escalates and she sounds as though she is getting distressed, repeat steps 6 to 9. You can repeat these as many times as you like until your baby is calm enough to fall asleep, but if it does not seem to be working let her fall asleep however she can and try again in a couple of days, weeks or months.

If you want your baby to fall asleep in your arms, or the pram, a sling or car seat it's fine to allow this occasionally at this stage. It's not likely to become a sleep problem just yet, so enjoy!

The COTSS method suggests that you try and let your baby be awake when you put them down in their bed. This may take time to achieve, and will also change between 'easy to put down awake' and 'harder to put down awake' at different points during the first 12 months.

Tip: If your baby is falling asleep while sucking at the breast/bottle or dummy, you can try removing the nipple/teat gently by breaking the suction with your little finger and seeing if she can continue to fall asleep on her own without the sucking.

Taken from:

"The Sensible Sleep Solution: a guide to your baby's sleep in the first year" by Sarah Blunden and Angie Willcocks. Wakelfield Press Adelaide 2012.

Note that the Sensible Sleep Solution, which uses the COTSS techniques for calming and settling, does not recommend leaving a baby to cry in distress.