



Child Sleep Consulting
Jennifer Denzel
www.restedfamily.com

Transitioning Child from a Crib to a Bed

Most children move out of the crib between ages 3 and 4. A child is ready to make the switch when:

- He's at least 2 ½ years old. This is the average age a child has the cognitive ability to understand the "big bed" rules like "stay in bed all night long".
- He's mastered the skill of putting himself to sleep at bedtime and getting himself back to sleep when he wakes during the night without any help.
- He's climbing out of his crib easily and frequently.
- He says he wants a "big boy" bed.

There are different ways to make the transition:

The Cold Turkey Approach—in other words, simply **removing the crib and replacing it with a bed**. If you do this:

- Put the new bed where your child's crib was (if the layout of the room allows for it) or
- Place it in a corner of the room so he still feels safely contained.
- Install a guard rail on the side of the bed that's not against a wall.
- Arrange a few pillows on the floor in case he tumbles out anyway.

The Gradual Approach:

- Start by leaving the crib railing down, with a stool at the side so he can get out by himself.
- Arrange some extra pillows on the floor for safety.
- If you can fit the new bed and the crib in the same room, you can start with reading books on the bed or have him nap in the bed. Then pick the big night where he sleeps in the bed at night. Once he's sleeping in his bed for naps and nights, you can remove the crib.
Some other things to keep in mind, no matter how you decide to make the transition:
- Consider putting a gate on the bedroom door, at least at the beginning, as both a training device and a safety measure. The gate delineates boundaries, helping a child understand that he has to stay in his bed. It will also prevent him from wandering around and possibly getting hurt in a dark house in the middle of the night.
- Make sure the room is safety proof now that he can get out of bed unsupervised.
- Let him pick out new sheets or a quilt (or at least give him a choice between two or three sets that meet your aesthetic requirements!).
- Explain the privileges but also review the rules. Make sure he understands that you will still put him to bed, but then he's expected to stay there.

- Be consistent from day one. If your tot gets out of bed, take him right back without any fuss.
- Reward him in the morning for staying in bed: give him lots of stickers and let him call his grandparents to brag about the new bed.
- Don't get in the habit of laying down with your child until they are asleep every night...you may find yourself stuck there for months and even years!

If you're about to embark on sleep training or some other major nighttime changes, like taking away a bottle or pacifier, consider whether it would be easier if you kept him in the crib a little longer. It keeps him in a safe and familiar environment while you're changing other aspects of his sleep, and it may be simpler if you don't have to worry about him getting up and out of bed while you're trying to teach him how to sleep in it.



Jennifer Denzel
916-546-8341