



Is your toddler ready for a big-kid bed?

Here's how to know — plus tips to make the transition from crib to bed easier on both of you.

"I want out!" That's the message your toddler will send (in one way or another) when he's ready to say bye-bye to the crib and say hello to a big-kid bed. Your child might actually verbalize wanting to be in a bigger bed or, more likely, simply start climbing out of the crib.

While there's set age when a toddler is ready to move on from the crib, little ones generally make the switch any time between 18 months and 3 1/2 years old, ideally as close to age 3 as possible. The timing is different for every child, but climbing out of the crib is usually the first sign that it's time!

Choosing a toddler bed

Bed options:

- a mattress on the floor – pretty straight forward!
- a toddler bed, which is a smaller version of a bed.
- actual twin bed outfitted with safety rails.

When looking for a bed choice, make sure it is:

- **Sturdy**
 - There'll be plenty of rolling, wiggling, jumping and bouncing on that bed, so make sure it can stand up to tough toddler treatment.
- **Low to the ground**
 - Keeping the bed on the down-low limits injuries from falls and makes it easier for your child to get in and out all by himself.
- **Equipped with rails**
 - The bed should come with side rails (some toddlers are wild sleepers) or allow you to add them.
- **Simply designed**
 - Choose a headboard and footboard without ornamentation, cutouts or protrusions to prevent rambunctious or curious toddlers from bumping heads or jamming fingers. Check to see that the finish is smooth (no splinters!) and all edges are rounded.
- **Matched with a mattress**
 - Your best bet is to buy the bed and mattress together so you can be certain of a snug fit (or buy a toddler bed that's designed to be used with a standard-sized crib mattress).

Toddler-bed safety

Done shopping? Time to set up his sleeping space with safety in mind.

- Find the right spot in the room — that means away from windows, blind cords, draperies, radiators, heat registers and wall or floor lamps.
- Place the headboard flush against the wall and leave ample space on both sides of the bed (or install rails on both sides) to limit the risk that your child could get trapped between the bed and the wall.
- Put a soft rug, sleeping bag or pillows on the floor around the bed to cushion falls.
- Check joints, screws or other hardware regularly to ensure they're not loose.

Tips to transition from a crib to a bed

Here are 10 things you can do to make this transition a smooth and safe one:

1. **Time it right.** If your toddler's life is already chock-full of change — new baby brother or sister, new school, weaning, potty training — wait before introducing the big-kid bed. This should be an exciting transition for everyone, not one that's overwhelming or scary. But if your child is excited about the new bed, go ahead!

2. **Consider a convertible.** A convertible crib that turns into a toddler bed with the removal of the front panel can make the change seem less drastic to a toddler if they are hesitant about the change.

3. **Read or talk all about it.** Find a few books about the big move, and share them with your toddler. Point out that the characters in the book are "just like you," and just as bravely moving on to their new bed. Talking about the change can also work just as well. Just remember that you'll need to talk about it often and over several days before the change.

4. **Let your child get in on the action.** To mark the occasion and help your child feel excited about the change, let him choose new sheets and kid-friendly bedding, and encourage him to personalize the new bed with a few favorite stuffed animals. If you decide on a toddler or twin bed, enlist your child's help in picking it out.

5. **Re-evaluate your childproofing.** You've likely already taken measures to toddler-proof your home, but this is a good time to re-evaluate. Are there any other safety precautions you should take in case your toddler does go adventuring during the night? You may want to consider blocking any stairwells with safety gates, locking windows and any doors that lead outside (or to the basement) and double-checking to ensure your child can't get into any areas where cleaning products, medications or other hazardous materials are kept.

6. **Ease into it.** If your toddler is giving up a crib for a new baby, the switch calls for an extra dose of TLC. You don't want your child to feel like he's being displaced. If you can, try to get the new bed set up before the baby arrives. Let your kiddo "practice" napping in it to feel more comfortable with the new digs.

7. **Don't change the bedtime routine.** Put the bed in the same space where the crib was, if possible. And if the bedtime routine worked before, stick with it. Mixing up the bedtime routine will just mix your child up.

8. **Keep exploration to a minimum.** For most kids, the newfound freedom to roam will be irresistible. It's up to you to reinforce bedtime rules. Request last-calls for water, stuffed toys and trips to the potty before the final tuck-in, and make sure your little one understands it's final. This will have to be repeated often, so have patience!

9. **Practice patience.** That said, be prepared for your child to constantly pop out of bed for a drink of water, need another snuggle or some other escape-from-my-room excuse. Calmly and silently return your toddler to bed as many times as it takes. Keep it as boring as possible and he'll get the idea. For kids who don't, some parents put gates at the bedroom door. If your little one has already proved he can climb out of the crib, chances are a gate won't be much of an obstacle.

10. **Praise your tot for practicing good bedtime habits.** A helpful solution for controlling your child's roaming habits might be a sticker chart. Give one sticker for each night he stays in bed. By the end of the week, reward him with a special treat, like an extra story at bedtime or a favorite family outing. Remember, toddlers love pleasing you and doing things for themselves. Helping yours learn to love a big-kid bed should be a win-win situation. Another tip would be to use a toddler clock. A toddler clock uses colors that show when it's time to sleep and when it's ok to get up.

When it's finally time to sleep in the new bed!

There might be more wake ups during this time of new freedom. What you can do is a shortened version of a sleep plan, which includes the following:

- Two nights near their bed
- Two nights in the middle of the room
- Two nights near the door

Be sure to be consistent and provide loving boundaries with this new freedom! Consistency will pay off and loving boundaries will help create security that this is the new way forward for sleep. For a review of Loving Boundaries, see page 160 within the Happy Sleeping Baby book.

Still need help after this? Don't hesitate to contact me for one-on-one support at [HappySleepingBaby.com](https://www.happysleepingbaby.com)



Moving to a big bed article and tips adapted from <https://www.whattoexpect.com/toddler/crib-to-toddler-bed>