



Sleep



Sleep

“A condition of body and mind which typically recurs for several hours every night, in which the nervous system is inactive, the eyes closed, the postural muscles relaxed, and consciousness practically suspended.” [Oxford Dictionary](#). After reading that terrifying definition of sleep it would be no surprise if you never nodded off again.

Sleep is as essential to our lives as food and water. Sleep is a big factor in our health; affecting everything from our mood and levels of fitness right through to more serious health issues. Sleep helps us process memories better, helping to retain and organise information more efficiently. It helps with our immune systems, metabolism and even cardiovascular health. Some people claim to be able to get by on only a few hours' sleep every night, but it's best to avoid them if you can. A good eight hours' sleep is the ideal amount, helping your mind & body in a myriad of ways, and importantly, making you much more approachable the next day at work.

If you had a good, restful sleep last night then you are very likely feeling in the zone today – you'll be happier, more productive, fresher overall. Today is the day you'll get things done, smile at the stranger on the train into work. On the other hand, if you were tossing & turning through a fitful night of unrest then you've probably already snapped at someone and made sure that no-one comes anywhere near you until at least midday.

So we need to sleep and we shouldn't feel any guilt about taking a nap if we get the chance, but how can we be sure that when a colleague whispers that they're just off for forty winks that they mean they're heading off for a sleep, and not something else entirely? As with any feature of our day-to-day lives that is so crucial, there are many ways to talk about sleep.

Here are some phrases used to describe the various stages of sleep.

Beauty Sleep

As we've already seen sleep is essential to us for lots of reasons, health and mood being just two of them. When someone is tired and irritable this manifests itself in their appearance. Close friends and work colleagues may suggest that this person needs to get their beauty sleep tonight, meaning a long, deep, peaceful night's sleep, so that they wake up fresh and back to normal the next day and don't bite anyone's head off.

Slept like a log

If you've ever watched a log for any period of time you'll understand that they don't move a lot, and in fact seem quite peaceful. Getting that sense of tranquillity through sleep is a goal for many.

Slept like a baby

Contrary to what you might think, sleeping like a baby doesn't mean rolling around crying, screaming and waking up everyone in earshot every two hours and then spending the whole next day asleep, instead it references the innocence of the baby, and lack of worrying thoughts that might keep it awake.

A nap

A short version of the full night's sleep. At a point during a particularly tiring day a person will lay down on any available horizontal surface and close their eyes. Before they know it they're in the land of nod (see below). This peaceful interlude in their day will give them a bit of oomph and allow them to power through the rest of the day. NB: never approach someone within the first 60 seconds after they have woken from a nap.

Power nap

This is the 1980s version of a nap and usually done in an expensive suit; you lie down, close your eyes and empty your mind of all thoughts, then sleep for a short time, except on waking you order someone to make you a strong coffee and if they don't you can have them fired.

The land of Nod

Whilst not a real place, it can seem real to those that spend any time there. It's just the alternate reality that you exist in when you go to sleep, named for the slow nodding movement that the person makes as they fall asleep, or nod off.

Forty Winks

Oh, and of course "Forty Winks" is really just a 1780s version of the short nap, to invigorate the mind, body & soul, so please let your colleague have their personal time.

Now, go out there and get some sleep!

