

The wake-time anchor

The body's sleep-wake rhythm has an anchor, and the anchor is wake time, not bedtime.

If you can hold one thing steady, hold the time you get out of bed. Bedtime then begins to fall into place, gradually, as the body's pressure to sleep builds across the day. The aim of this worksheet is not perfection. It is fourteen days of steady wake time, with light and movement soon after, and an honest record of what shifts.

i This is not a sleep program. If sleep has been difficult for months, the wake-time anchor sits alongside other work. It is one piece, and a useful first one. It is not a substitute for a clinical sleep program.

THE SCIENCE, BRIEFLY

Process S, sleep pressure

From the moment you wake, the brain builds pressure to sleep again. The longer you are awake, and the more demand the day places on you, the higher that pressure climbs by night.

Process C, the circadian rhythm

A roughly 24-hour signal in the body, anchored largely by light in the eyes soon after waking. A steady anchor means a steady signal. A drifting anchor means a drifting signal.

WHAT ANCHORING THE WAKE TIME TENDS TO DO

Steadies the signal

- Sleep pressure builds on a predictable schedule
- The circadian signal stays anchored to one point
- Sleepiness arrives at a more predictable time at night
- The variability the body has to absorb is reduced

WHAT CHASING MISSED SLEEP TENDS TO DO

Drifts the signal

- Weekend sleep-ins push the rhythm later, week after week
- The Sunday-night insomnia loop becomes familiar
- Light exposure shifts later, so the signal drifts later
- The body keeps trying to guess what time it is

HOW TO USE THE ANCHOR FOR FOURTEEN DAYS

1 Pick one wake time

The same time every day, weekends included. Choose a time that fits the life you actually live, not the one you wish you lived.

2 Get out of bed

Out of bed at that time, even on poor-sleep nights. The wake time is not when the alarm goes off; it is when your feet leave the floor.

3 Get light, soon

Outdoor light is strongest. By a bright window if the morning is dark or cold. Ten to twenty minutes in the first hour is the usual aim.

CHOOSING YOUR ANCHOR TIME

Pick the earliest time you must reliably be up on a working weekday, then hold it on the weekend too.

- **Make it realistic, not aspirational.** If you must be at work by 9, a 6:30 wake time may be the anchor. A 5:30 wake time will likely buckle by day four.
- **Shift workers and parents of young children** are exceptions where a single anchor may not be possible. Bring this to a conversation rather than forcing one.
- **It is the time your feet hit the floor,** not the time the alarm sounds. Allow ten minutes for getting up if that is how you wake.
- **Once chosen, hold it for the fortnight.** Changing the anchor partway through resets the body's adjustment process; the fortnight begins again from day one.

WHAT THE FORTNIGHT USUALLY LOOKS LIKE, BROADLY

DAYS 1 TO 3

The body has not adjusted yet

Mornings often feel harder. Sleepiness may arrive earlier in the evening than it used to, or not at all. This is the body registering the new anchor, not a sign the anchor is wrong.

DAYS 4 TO 7

Bedtime begins to migrate

Sleep pressure starts to build on a more predictable schedule. The time you feel ready for bed begins to settle. Daytime energy tends to flatten, with less of the late-afternoon trough.

WEEK 2

The rhythm starts to hold

Wake time becomes less effortful. Sleepiness arrives at a more predictable hour. A poor night still happens; it is no longer the whole pattern. Two weeks is usually enough to see this shape.

Remember

The wake-time anchor is a small action with a slow effect. Two weeks is usually enough to see the body settle. The first week often feels worse before it feels better.

When the fortnight is done, you can sit with what you notice, or bring the tracker to a first conversation. Either is a fine next step.

Fourteen-day wake-time anchor

One row per day for two weeks. **Best guesses are fine; partial rows are still useful.** The pattern across the fortnight is what matters, not any single day. The "out of bed" column is the one that defines the anchor.

DAY & DATE	WAKE TIME <i>e.g. 6:45 AM</i>	OUT OF BED <i>feet on floor</i>	LIGHT SOON AFTER <i>minutes</i>	ENERGY BY MIDDAY <i>1 to 10</i>	ANYTHING TO NOTE
WEEK 1					
Day 1 <i>date:</i>					
Day 2 <i>date:</i>					
Day 3 <i>date:</i>					
Day 4 <i>date:</i>					
Day 5 <i>date:</i>					
Day 6 <i>date:</i>					
Day 7 <i>date:</i>					
WEEK 2					
Day 8 <i>date:</i>					
Day 9 <i>date:</i>					
Day 10 <i>date:</i>					
Day 11 <i>date:</i>					
Day 12 <i>date:</i>					
Day 13 <i>date:</i>					
Day 14 <i>date:</i>					

AFTER THE FOURTEEN DAYS

What did the pattern show

Where did the body start to settle. Where did it not. Which days felt easier. Which days felt harder, and what was the day before doing.

MEET & GREET

Free
15 minutes
Online or in-person
No obligation