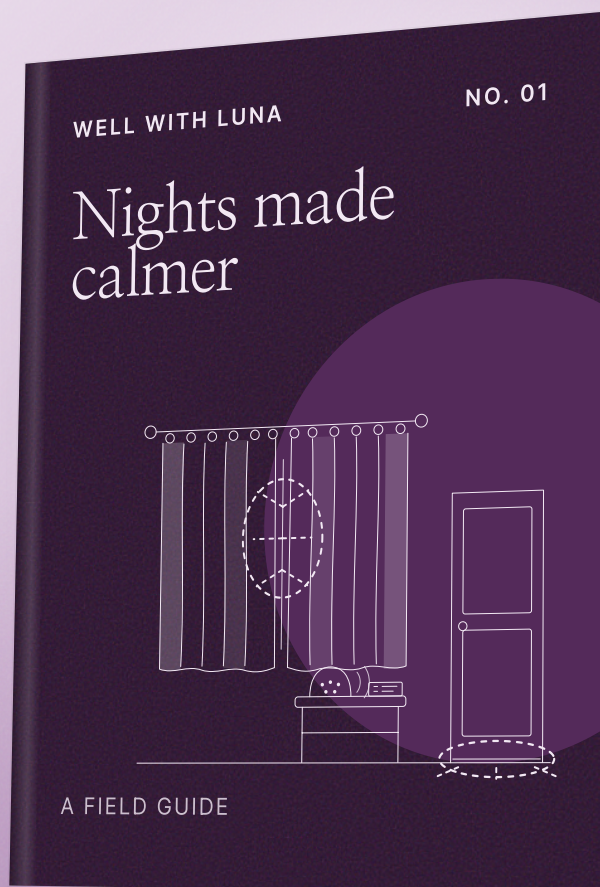




EVENING GUIDE · SLEEP

The bedroom audit, decoded for calmer nights

For light sleepers in bright, noisy flats who want steadier rest. After reading, you will be able to check light, sound, temperature and bedding in one evening and keep a simple log.

- **Dark hours**
Small light leaks can hold back melatonin more than a lamp left on.
- **Soft sound**
Dense curtains hush a room a little, steady noise covers the rest.
- **Cool bed**
A cool room with layers you can shed supports unbroken sleep.

By Annika Holm · Updated Aug 19, 2026 · 8 min read

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Most people adjust the pillow and call it done, while light from the hall and heat under the covers do the quiet work of breaking sleep. A slow walk through the bedroom can show where rest thins out. Once those spots are softened, falling asleep feels less like effort and more like permission.

01

Block light without losing morning brightness

Start with the lights off. Sit on the bed near ten in the evening and let your eyes adjust. Look for pale edges around curtains, a line under the door, a charger glow, a hallway lamp spilling through frosted glass. Those small sources matter because ambient light before bed is reported to reduce melatonin production by up to 71.4 percent. In low light conditions melatonin onset is reported to occur roughly 2 hours earlier than in standard brightness. “Light plays a huge role in the timing of sleep.” Dr. Chris Winter, neurologist and sleep specialist, said it plainly for a reason.

Blackout curtains are described as blocking up to 99 percent of outside light. The number holds when the fabric is wide enough and hung with care. Proper installation advice includes placing rods near the ceiling and extending drapes beyond the window frame. A wraparound rod helps at the sides. A pelmet or a second blind helps at the top. Length that meets the sill leaves a gap where streetlight pools, so cloth that falls past the frame works better.

Test the change the same night. Close the curtains, turn off the overheads, leave only the lamp you read by. Then switch that off too and watch the room for a minute. If window edges still glow, note which side needs a wider panel. If the door lets in a draft, a draft stopper or a towel for one night can tell you whether a permanent seal is worth it. A soft eye mask covers what fabric cannot, and it travels well.

Complete darkness at night can make mornings feel flat for some people. Pair night darkness with morning sunlight and steady rise times. Open the curtains at first light, step to the window with tea, keep wake time within the same hour. Darkness tells the body when to begin, light tells it when to return.

FROM THE EDITORS

Melatonin is the hormone that rises in dim light and supports sleep onset. Light does not need to feel bright to slow that rise, which is why door gaps and LEDs count.

02

Soften sound and use steady noise with care

List what you hear from bed. Traffic on one wall, voices in the hall, pipes, a partner breathing heavily, the lift. Place the bed away from the noisiest wall when the layout allows. A bookshelf with books against that wall can dull reflections. A rug can soften footsteps from below.

Blackout curtains are described as reducing noise by about 5 to 15 decibels depending on fabric and installation. Dense weave and full coverage do more than sheer panels. They reduce echo and some higher frequency sound but are not soundproof, so loud traffic may still need other fixes. Expect a hush rather than silence. Earplugs may help some people with partner snoring or thin walls, though comfort varies and long term use deserves care around ear health.

A white noise machine can cover what curtains leave behind. It works by giving the brain a steady sound to rest on, so a bus brake or a door click stands out less. Try placement first, then volume. A low table across the room often sounds smoother than a speaker by the ear. Keep the volume steady and modest, loud enough to blur traffic and voices, soft enough that you can still hear an alarm. Use it for traffic and voices, not as a cure for loud snoring or apnea. Snoring that is loud, nightly, or paired with gasps and daytime sleepiness deserves a clinician rather than a louder machine.

Keep the habit simple. Same sound each night, same level, on before lights out. If you share the bed, agree on the choice together. Some people prefer rain or brown noise to plain white hiss. What matters is constancy through the night, not variety.

03

Keep the room cool and shape the bed to you

Make the room cool, dark and quiet as the core of healthy sleep habits. Keep it cool without chasing a number, so there is no single thermostat setting to quote. What thermostat setting suits a given reader remains unclear. Turn the setting down a little at night and notice how the covers feel. Warm bedding choices can then do the flexible work.

Choose breathable sheets that do not trap heat. Layer blankets you can remove rather than one heavy duvet. A top sheet plus a light quilt lets a warm sleeper shed heat near morning without waking fully. Socks that slip off easily, a pillowcase that stays cool to the cheek, and sleepwear that breathes all support the same aim. If night sweats persist or heat feels tied to medication or health, bring it to a professional.

Pillow and mattress fit shapes sleep as much as fabric does. Side sleepers need shoulder and hip cushioning, so the spine stays level and the shoulder can sink without pinching. Back sleepers need lumbar support and neutral spine, so the lower back does not arch and the neck does not jut forward. For mixed side and back sleepers a medium firm feel around 6 out of 10 is presented as a versatile starting point. A medium loft pillow with neck support is described as workable for both side and back positions.

Suggested mattress checks include pressing the surface, lying on the side to test shoulder cradle and hip level, and checking edge support. Press with the palm to feel give. Lie on the side for a few minutes and ask whether the shoulder feels cradled and the hips stay level. Tonight in bed, lie on your back and slide a hand under your lower back to feel for a small and even gap. Sit on the edge to see if it holds when you rise at night. None of this names a best brand. Take these as gentle examples not test winners, and comfort stays personal.

FROM THE EDITORS

Cool sleep means heat can leave the body easily. Bedding matters because it decides how much warmth stays trapped around skin through the night.

04

Keep a two week diary and read trackers lightly

A typical sleep diary covers a two week period and is most effective when completed daily. Keep it beside the bed. Sleep diary guidance suggests completing it every day, if possible within one hour of getting up. If a diary day is missed, guidance says leave that day blank and give best estimates rather than clock watch. Do not stare at the clock through the night to feed the page. Diary estimates are enough for patterns.

A sleep diary records bedtime, night wakings, morning wake time, plus exercise, naps, medication, caffeine and alcohol timing. Keep entries short. Time lights went out, time sleep seemed to come, any waking and its length, final rise, a line on coffee after lunch or wine with dinner, a nap on the sofa, a late run. After two weeks, look for links rather than single bad nights. Late caffeine may sit near broken sleep. Long evening scrolling may sit near late onset. A heavy blanket may sit near early waking.

Sleep numbers from a diary include sleep window, time awake, time asleep, and sleep efficiency calculated as time asleep divided by sleep window times 100. Target sleep efficiency in the diary method is 85 percent to 95 percent. If the window is eight hours and time asleep is seven, efficiency is 87.5 percent. Below range across many nights may mean too long in bed or too much wakefulness within it. Above range with daytime fatigue may mean too little sleep opportunity. Use the maths as a lantern, not a verdict.

Trackers can sit beside the diary. A multicenter validation study tested 11 consumer sleep trackers against in lab polysomnography in 75 participants. In the validation study epoch by epoch agreement varied, with highest macro F1 score 0.69 and lowest 0.26. Reviews of trackers report sleep and wake detection accuracy typically in the 85 to 95 percent range, while stage classification is typically 60 to 75 percent. Other summaries state basic sleep detection can exceed 90 percent accuracy, while stage tracking may be 50 to 80 percent accurate depending on brand and conditions. Consumer trackers estimate sleep from movement, heart rate, temperature and sound, not direct brain wave measurement.

That means trackers are reasonably useful for total sleep time and bedtime patterns but remain unreliable for stage minutes and single night scores. Trust total sleep time and bedtime trends. Treat stage minutes and single scores as estimates. Compare weeks not nights and note how you feel. Whether tracker flagged breathing changes mean apnea remains unproven, since screening features are not diagnosis. If breathing pauses, loud snoring, or morning headaches appear, speak with a clinician.

05

The checklist

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- ☐ Sit in the dark bedroom and list window leaks and door glow
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- ☐ Extend curtain rods high and wide past the window frame
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- ☐ Add a mask for leftover leaks and travel
-
- ☐ Open curtains at first light and keep rise times steady
-
- ☐ Move bed from the noisiest wall where possible
-
- ☐ Test dense curtains and earplugs for voices and snoring
-
- ☐ Place white noise low and steady through the night
-
- ☐ Turn the bedroom cool and layer breathable bedding
-
- ☐ Test pillow loft on side and back for neutral neck
-
- ☐ Press, side lie and edge test the mattress feel
-
- ☐ Keep diary by bed for two weeks within one hour of rising
-
- ☐ Log caffeine, alcohol, naps, exercise and meds with sleep times
-

06

Sources and further reading

- Accuracy of 11 Wearable, Nearable, and Airable Consumer Sleep Trackers: Prospective Multicenter Validation Study · [pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)
- Sleep Diary - Sleep Education · sleepeducation.org
- Keeping a sleep diary Oxford Health CAMHS · oxfordhealth.nhs.uk
- Sleep Tracker Accuracy: What Oura, Whoop, and Apple Watch Are Actually Measuring · thesleepconsultant.com
- Will Making Your Bedroom Darker Improve Sleep? — Little Dipper Sleep Raleigh, North Carolina · littledipperwellness.com
- Sleep Diary Sleepwell · mysleepwell.ca
- The Truth About Consumer Sleep Trackers - telemedora · telemedora.com

For information only, not medical advice. Ongoing trouble sleeping, loud snoring with pauses in breathing, or low mood that lingers deserves a doctor's attention, and supplements can interact with medication.



WRITTEN BY

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Annika looks after the brands Well with Luna works with and makes sure every sponsored page says so. She grew up in Uppsala with very short winter days, which is where her interest in light and sleep began.
