



# Baby-Led sleep with Twins

# THE CHALLENGES

Twins will always be challenging when it comes to sleep, especially if there aren't always two parents helping because one parent is away working or the family doesn't have any additional support to help them. It's common for parents of twins to resort to a cry-it-out or Ferber-type method to get more sleep as they get twice the amount of night wakings (sometimes not at the same time) and twice the feeds and are just generally exhausted. As we already know, not all sleep training methods will work depending on the baby and their unique temperament. I fully understand that a more hands-on approach and a slower approach will take twice as long when you have twins and can be more challenging. Sadly, I don't see many twins in my line of work. However, this doesn't mean parents need to sleep train if they don't want to and have the extra support to follow their babies' lead.

Twins

## Gentle Reminder

You are dealing with two completely different babies. They will likely want to eat at different times, sleep at different times and have completely different temperaments. Following their lead would mean spending your entire day trying to tend to both babies, getting one baby to sleep while the other is eating, contact napping with one while working on crib sleep with the other. If you do not have any help, it's most likely you'll be up all night long with each baby at different times of the night, leading to burnout and exhaustion. You need support!

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## WHERE TO START?

How you approach your babies' sleep really depends on who is around to help you. If you and your partner are available, or another family member or if you're lucky to have one, a night nurse. Each of you would take a baby and approach each baby's current challenge in a way that works for that baby as an individual. I always suggest that the easier sleeper be handled by the least desired or non-breastfeeding parent and the more difficult sleeper by the more desired or breastfeeding. Keeping your babies in the same room works fine if they don't seem to wake each other up. However, if Baby A wakes, their designated parent goes in, and for Baby B, it's the other. Depending on how tired you both are, it can also be helpful (if possible) to each move a crib beside where you are sleeping. Alternatively, whoever is in charge of the more challenging baby can set up a space on the floor beside their baby's crib (or turn the crib into a sidecar). This way, you do not need to fully get out of bed to respond.

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If you decide that you would like to separate your twins, this allows one parent or twin to sleep better (if one twin is more wakeful at night). It is always much easier to move the 'easier' or more laid-back twin into a new location; my guide, 'Moving Your Baby into Their Own Sleep Space,' is a great resource for this. Separating your twins may be a really great strategy if there are two people involved, as you will each only need to hear/address the wakes of one twin if you stay in the same room as 'your twin.' This will add sleep for both of you since it is almost as if you are only dealing with the waking of one child. Separating twins for naps can also be a good strategy if one twin will nap in a crib, and the other (the more challenging twin) will only nap in your arms or on the bed with you.

## Twins

# SOLO PARENTING WITH TWINS

If you are managing all wakes alone, then it may be necessary to work with one baby at a time, leaving the other, for example, to continue bedsharing if that is how you are currently managing this stage. Working with one baby at a time may mean that, for the sake of fatigue and the length of the process, You need to make changes faster than you would if you were following their lead (parent-led change). This also means you could be met with strong emotions from the more difficult or sensitive twin.

Understanding their temperament and how it affects sleep is important.

If you decide to work with both babies at once in the same room, you will probably need to work on soothing them more with your voice and back/bum pats instead of picking them up (depending on the baby's weight) or feeding them.

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## NAPS WITH TWINS

Naps with younger twins may require waking both of them when the other wakes from their nap in order to attempt to keep some sort of routine for the sake of your sanity. Following each baby's lead can be difficult because you may be trying to get one baby to sleep while the other needs to feed. There are a lot more parent-led changes when dealing with twins than baby-led, and that's ok. As long as you are supporting emotions and working through things with them, everyone will be ok.

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## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

It is important to remember that if your twins were born prematurely. They might be eight months old but sleeping like a six-month-old because they were born two months early. You also need to take into account that if they were separated from you at birth and spent time in the NICU (therefore experiencing trauma and separation). It's only expected that they will have more difficulties wanting to sleep separately from you in the first 6 - 8 months. As well, premies tend to have higher rates of reflux and other medical challenges, which can cause challenges around sleep. These issues need to be addressed before any sleep work takes place.

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