

## Making the move from cot to the big bed easier!

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This is a very exciting time and a big developmental step for your toddler. Similar to other changes such as toilet training, feeding themselves and language development, it heralds the transition from 'baby in a cot' to toddler becoming a 'big' boy or girl.

Many parents ask when the right time is to move from the cot to the big bed. I suggest leaving your toddler in the cot as long as you can until they are getting too big or are climbing out and at risk of falling on their head. They are contained in the cot and not roaming about the house. I think from two years of age is a sensible and appropriate age.

Two common reasons for parents prematurely planning the move to the big bed are the toddler rolling around and hitting themselves on the sides of the cot and the toddler climbing out. Your toddler actually appreciates the sides of the cot and gains security from knowing the sides will stop them from falling out when they are mobile in bed. In most cases the parents react more alarmed at the sound of their toddler bouncing off the sides than the toddler. I also find that sleeping bags provide essential warmth for the mobile toddler in the cot and reduce the ability to climb out of the cot.

The keys to making the move from the cot to the big bed are

1. timing
2. communication
3. cooperation
4. planning.

If your toddler is involved in the process they are more likely to enjoy it! Keep in mind that if the timing is wrong and your toddler isn't ready for the big bed it's a good idea to leave it a few more months and try again later rather than stress everyone out now.

Allow the toddler to be involved in decisions on picking the linen and bed covers and/or changes in décor. A guard rail may help to increase a feeling of security and also prevent falls. If room permits have one side of the bed along a wall for extra security.

If you are able, leave the cot set up in the toddler's room and make up the big bed with the linen as well. Give the toddler time to feel comfortable and excited about the new bed by spending time in their room with you sorting the washing or playing/reading stories on the big bed. When the toddler feels comfortable suggest they start having day sleeps in the big bed at first before moving to night sleeps.

The more positive "big boy/girl" reinforcement the better with bragging phone calls to anyone who will get excited! Encourage role modeling by older admired friends/relatives. The two-three year old will hold the opinion of 9 and 10 years plus children in high regard and listen to encouragement intently. Discuss the older child sleeping in a big bed and being a 'big boy/girl'. Special rewards for cooperation and/or star charts work well as long as the reward comes quickly. Two or three stars is enough before a reward is due otherwise the toddler will lose interest. The rewards can be simple like picking meals, or the place to walk to for a play, or visit a friend or they can be pieces to a lego set or a cup/bowl/plate set from preferred character. If the toddler feels pressured into the move they will resist.

If you have no choice in the timing because a new baby needs the cot I would try and borrow a cot or use a portacot for your toddler and use the higher normal cot for the baby especially when you are leaning over it many times day and night.

Try and wait until the toddler feels comfortable with their day sleeps in the big bed before

insisting on the night sleeps. Remember that a new baby/renovations or other major event in the toddler's life can be very unsettling and create anxiety about changes. It is best to initiate major changes in your toddler's routine such as a big bed well before the baby arrives or well after when the toddler feels comfortable again. If your toddler is upset about moving out of the cot and you are happy to leave them in there try and borrow a cot and wait until they are ready to move to the big bed. The right time is when you all feel comfortable about the decision and of course, when the toddler is too big for the cot!

If you move the toddler into the big bed and then do not have the energy to keep up a strategy for keeping them in there move the toddler back into a cot/ port-a-cot for a few more months until you feel stronger or they decide they are going to cooperate.