

Sleep 101: Sleep Smarter - Study Harder!

The Student Sleep Survival Guide - A Crash Course on Hacking Your Sleep Routine

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We talk about training, rest days, and recovery in sports all the time - but never in school.

But your brain? It's just like an athlete.

And sleep? That's its recovery system.

It's how your brain processes lectures, locks in memories, regulates mood, and literally recharges your ability to focus and show up the next day.

No sleep = no recovery. No recovery = no performance.

As a physiotherapist and former full-time student (hello years of undergrad, master's, and all those clinical placements), I didn't fully get the importance of sleep until I was years into my professional career - already dealing with fatigue, burnout, and brain fog. I wish someone had told me then: your brain is an endurance athlete, and sleep is how it trains.

Why Sleep Actually Matters

- **Memory & Learning:** No sleep = no storage. Sleep helps convert short-term memories into long-term knowledge. Your brain can't process or retain what you learn without it.
- **Energy & Focus:** Sleep helps regulate your **circadian rhythm** - your body's internal clock - so your brain knows when to feel alert and when to wind down.
- **Mood Regulation:** Poor sleep makes stress, anxiety, and low mood *worse*.
- **Injury & Pain:** Lack of sleep increases physical injury risk and sensitivity to pain.

Sleep isn't lazy - it's brain fuel. Learn to love it now, so you're not learning the hard way later.

7 Quick Wins to Fix Your Sleep (Without Overhauling Your Life)

1. **Cut Caffeine 8 Hours Before Bed.** It has a half-life of 6–8 hours, meaning it stays in your system long after you drink it. A 3 p.m. coffee can mess with your sleep at 10 p.m. - even if you think you're immune.
2. **Screens Off 1 Hour Before Sleep.** Blue light delays melatonin - your brain's natural "sleep signal" hormone. Try a wind-down playlist instead.
3. **Go Outside in the Morning.** Morning sunlight anchors your circadian rhythm.
4. **Don't Work in Bed.** Your brain needs to associate bed with rest, not stress.
5. **Move Daily.** Even a walk helps regulate melatonin and improve sleep quality.
6. **Keep Your Room Cool.** Ideal sleep temp is 18-20°C (64-68°F).
7. **Same Wake Time Every Day.** Yes, even weekends. Your brain craves rhythm.

Bonus - Sleep Position 101: Ever wake up with a stiff neck or sore back? It's not just your mattress - it's your posture while sleeping. Most students (as well as most humans out there) have never been shown this.

- **Back Sleepers:** Try a pillow under your knees and a thin pillow under your head. Avoid over-stuffing - it can tilt your neck upwards in a harsh angle!
- **Side Sleepers:** Use a firm pillow between your knees to avoid letting your legs cross (it twists your spine) and make sure your head pillow keeps your neck neutral.

- **Stomach Sleepers:** It's tough on the neck - try transitioning back or sleeping if possible. It's tough, but you can slowly add pillows under your front side to get used to it.

Want to see this in action?

Check out the quick demo videos on positioning [insert link of a video made by Jade].