

# Rise And Run: How To Become A Morning Runner

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Making small adjustments is key to transitioning from night owl to early bird.

For most night owls the thought of being a morning runner sounds like a dream in a far away land. Waking up early when the snooze button is within reach can seem like an impossible feat for a runner more inclined to sleep in and sneak their run in later in the day. For many runners, however, necessity forces them to run in the morning or they risk not running that day. With a job, family, endless errands and responsibilities, finding time for a run later in the day can seem near impossible at times.

Waking up even just a half hour earlier in the morning is one way to ensure your run happens before you set about tackling your daily schedule and responsibilities. Learning to skip the snooze button and become a morning person is the tough part, but Atlanta psychiatrist and psychologist Tracey Marks, who authored the book "Master Your Sleep", knows anyone can make themselves a morning person. "I do think its possible for people to switch from being night owls to be able to be more energetic and more alert in the daytime," Marks says.

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Marks notes that making this change is not an overnight marvel, but requires making a change to your lifestyle. "It really is more of a lifestyle change. It's not a quick fix," Marks says. "If you're up until midnight on your iPad [becoming a morning person] is not going to work."

A runner who makes small adjustments to his or her sleep schedule and works toward becoming a morning person—rather than trying to make the switch over night—will find more success. Here are some of the small lifestyle changes Marks suggests for making the transition to from night owl to early bird.

## Make Small, Gradual Changes

Set your alarm for 20-30 minutes earlier than you normally wake up. [Marks](#) suggests that making this small adjustment to your wakeup time helps your body to gradually adapt rather than shock it into waking up earlier than it wants in the morning. Continue setting your alarm 20-30 minutes earlier every day until you reach your ideal wake up time. Marks notes that in time your body will become adept to this sleep cycle and the need for an alarm will become a thing of the past. "You shouldn't have to set an alarm clock," she says.

## Expose Yourself To Natural Light

"The most effective way to switch [from night owl to morning person] is by using light exposure or light therapy," Marks says. "This is especially true for people who have a tendency to stay up late and not feel tired." She suggests flooding your room with natural light as soon as you wake up if the sun is out. "Early morning light exposure can help shift your body clock so you are more alert

early in the morning and you follow the pattern of getting tired early in the evening,” explains Marks. “Sunlight can do this”

However, if you are waking up before the sun or live in a climate that doesn’t see the sun as often, using a light box offers similar light exposure that will help make you more alert and successfully shift your sleep schedule. Marks recommends light boxes such as the Lite Book and the Phillips Go Lyte. “[Lite boxes] can be very effective in changing your body rhythm so you can wake up naturally on your own,” she says. “Lite boxes trigger our brain for the sleep/wake schedule.” Just 15 to 20 minutes of exposure upon waking up can help make you more alert and ready to run.

### Change Your Behavior

“Some people have an internal clock that’s a little longer than 24 hours; they are driven by birth to stay up later and it’s impossible for them to go to bed at 10 in the evening. But for other people it’s a behavioral pattern,” explains Marks. “We get use to watching the nightly news and end up just staying up later, fighting our naturally tendency and then you end up in a pattern of staying up late and waking up late.” It may sound like common sense that if you go to bed earlier, you’ll be able to wake up earlier, but Marks sees many people who continue to fight their late-night drowsiness. Changing this behavior and going to bed when tired can be all some people need in winning the fight with their alarm clock. “If you regularly go to bed and wake up at the same time every day your body can get into that rhythm where it just does it on its own,” explains Marks.

Marks notes that a runner already has something going for them in becoming a morning person—running allows you to get more deep sleep and helps you wake up ready to tackle the day. “Exercise does tend to make your sleep more efficient,” she explains. “And getting more deep sleep contributes to waking up feeling rested.”