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## Get back to basics: how to sleep better

*Make your bedroom the most restful place in the house, from a calm interior design to pillows that use space technology, writes Emily Brooks*



**T**echnology is said to be the enemy of sleep. The stimulation of interacting with your phone or tablet before going to bed combined with the blue light emanating from

the screen are thought to disrupt the body's natural night-time rhythms. On the other hand, technology is also coming to the rescue of poor sleepers: from highly engineered mattresses to small gadgets that will help you drop off and wake up, there are many modern methods to tackling this age-old problem.

Simba, the mattress maker, has used a data-driven approach to create a one-size-fits-all mattress in response to the idea that everybody needs pillows and other bedding tailored to their sleeping position and weight. "We worked with the Sleep to Live Institute, based in the US, which has data on 10million people's sleeping habits," says Emily Wynne-Jones, head of product development. "We were then able to identify specific pressure points on the body, which correspond to zones on the mattress – for example, across the shoulders and upper back, or against your calf – and these zones dip slightly, giving extra support and comfort. Using such a vast databank we've been able to tailor the design to suit 95 per cent of the population."

The resulting multi-layered mattress, a hybrid of memory foam and springs, arrives rolled in a box for ease of transportation – an additional feat of engineering, since the conical springs had to be designed not to tangle when rolled. Its pillows are also different, stuffed with memory foam tubes that have a breathable strip around the edge; there's also an optional heat and moisture controlling "smart coating" made from Outlast, a patented material that has its origins in space technology.

All this tech goes against the other prevailing trend in mattresses, the return to natural materials such as wool, deemed to be more breathable. Wynne-Jones argues that Simba matches that, plus has the added benefit of tailored support. "Yes, you could have a complex layering system with cashmere,

wool, silk and cotton, but by using new materials you not only get that breathability but a real responsiveness that you wouldn't find in those products."

Royal Auping, the Dutch bedding company, takes a similar approach by zoning its top-of-the-range mattresses, with a different composition in the shoulder and hip area. The bases of the beds are made from metal mesh that indents in the shoulder zone as sleepers move between their back and side, meaning they're less likely to wake up. Royal Auping is also the go-to brand for highly engineered, adjustable motorised beds that do not look like they belong in an institution.

Jonathan Warren, director at online bedroom retailer Time 4 Sleep, agrees that the main areas of growth are all-natural, handmade mattresses and those with a hi-tech approach. "There is definitely a focus on craftsmanship, but memory foam mattresses have also enjoyed a revival due to the arrival of gel memory foam, which helps to reduce heat and increase blood circulation, as well as reducing the strain on aching joints."

Bedside gadgetry is another massive industry, with money pouring into crowdfunding sites for anything that is sleep-related. The Gravity Blanket, for example – a really heavy blanket, weighing up to 25lb, which swaddles the user – made headlines for raising more than \$4.7million (£3.48million), smashing its target of \$21,500. The Sunrise Smart Pillow (a "regeneration station for your head"), which incorporates sunrise-mimicking LED lighting, raised \$740,000 against a target of \$50,000.

These products may take a while to reach the UK, but there are plenty of other gadgets if you've got room to fill on your bedside table. White noise ma-





chimes block out background sounds, replacing them with a fuzzy nothingness or nature noises, while the Sensorwake is an "olfactory alarm clock" that wakes you up with pleasant smells, from mint to cut grass. Diane Simpson, lighting buyer at John Lewis, recommends Beurer's Wake Up Light: "It has a sunrise and sunset dimmer to help regulate your sleep/wake cycle and combat Seasonal Affective Disorder. It really feels like you're waking up to gentle sunlight, slowly brightening up your bedroom, rather than the sharp tone of the alarm clock we're used to."

High-end homes harness the capabilities of integrated technology systems to encourage sleep. "As much as hi-tech features such as intelligent sound systems can be exciting when entertaining, smart technology has an equally important place in the bedroom," says Paul Cook, managing director of developer Dukelease. Its penthouse apartment at Artisan, a development in Fitzrovia, has a system that can be programmed to use low-level lighting and turn off the fan in the bathroom at night, so as not to disturb a sleeping partner. Blinds open and close as the sun rises and sets, and lighting and temperature can be

precisely set to regulate sleep.

It's also possible to create restful spaces that encourage sleep with no gadgetry at all. "I think I would approach this in the lowest-tech way possible," says interior designer Rebekah Caudwell. "I've got three insomniacs in my family, so it's a subject close to my heart." She advises: "Make sure it's a room that you always look forward to going into. Give it a facelift, whether that's repainting, hanging a favourite piece of art or buying a new duvet cover. Storage is important: if you have a clut-

tered mind, then walking into a cluttered bedroom is going to be a real problem." She also rates natural fabrics (including her favourite, a silk pillow), sleep sprays and warm-toned lights as ways to improve the bedroom.

"Avoid bright colours and too many patterns as this stimulates the senses,"

says Gail Taylor of th2designs. "Generally we use a light, natural palette of soft colours with warm undertones such as eau-de-nil and cream. We sometimes use a darker colour, but generally just for a feature wall behind the headboard; this creates a sense of being cocooned. A dark blue is a great choice." As well as advocating good storage, she says that "symmetrical use of accessories, photos, books, lamps and paintings create a sense of order and calm."

Tara Bernerd, who has created hotel bedrooms for Four Seasons, says that "texture and layering are always crucial, and it is important to play with different fabrics and finishes. Always consider the soundproofing quality of a particular material: fabric plays a big role in creating a soft, more seductive atmosphere." Mary Graham of interior designer firm Salvesen Graham opts for fabric-lined walls to achieve that cocooning feel. "It creates a sense of warmth and will help absorb sound so that you have an undisturbed night's sleep," she says. She also avoids harsh downlights in bedrooms, instead building a layered look using lamps, picture lights and wall lights, all on dimmers.

If you cannot afford silk, pure linen bed linen is becoming popular for its breathability – and it looks good unironed. "For the softest, most breathable natural bedding, you can't go wrong with linen. The fabric gets softer and softer with wear and last for years," says Jessica Mason, founder of linen company Piglet. "It also helps to regulate your body's temperature, which is a key part of sleeping better."

All of the design experts are in agreement when it comes to taking your phone or tablet to bed: it's a big no-no. Put them away, says Caudwell, "and you get to reclaim your bedroom as your bedroom. Re-designating that space as a place of rest is the most important thing."



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## MAKING SENSE OF SLEEP



**OLFACTORY ALARM**  
 £78 by Sensorwake  
 (amazon.co.uk)



**HOMNI ANALYSER**  
 £199 by Terraillon  
 (terraillon.com)



Symmetrical: a bedroom by Rebekah Caudwell, who advises staying low-tech

‘Avoid patterns and bold colours as this stimulates the senses’



**WL 90 WAKE UP LIGHT**  
 £130 by Beurer  
 (johnlewis.com)



**HYBRID PILLOW**  
 £95 by Simba  
 (simbasleep.com)



**WHITE NOISE MAKER**  
 £29.99 by Avantek  
 (amazon.co.uk)



**BEDDIT 3 MONITOR**  
 £129.95 by Apple  
 (apple.com)



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**SUNRISE,  
 SUNSET**

Wake up to natural  
 light in Hemel  
 Hempstead, left,  
 for sale with Strutt  
 & Parker at £1.75m;  
 Simba developed a  
 one-type-fits-all  
 mattress, right





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MICHELE PANZERI, ALEX JAMES



**HEAD SPACE**  
Little Oldwick Barn in Sussex, cover, is £2.5m with Strutt & Parker; a bright, clean bedroom from 1508 London, main



