Sleeping on a plane: when to sleep, when to stay awake, and what to pack

Lull Plane sleep checklist · instacalc.co

Carry-on sleep checklist

- **Your watch on destination time.** The Yellow Book's advice is to time meals, sleep and light to the destination time zone during the flight.
- **Sleep if it's night where you land.** In the NHS's words, “try to sleep if it's night time at your destination”. The guide's tables give the hours.
- **Eye mask and earplugs,** “if they help you sleep” (NHS).
- **Water.** The NHS says to drink plenty of it, and the Yellow Book says to stay hydrated, because losing fluid can make jet lag symptoms worse.
- **Go easy on alcohol and coffee.** The NHS and the Yellow Book both say so. Alcohol breaks up sleep, and the NHS says too much caffeine or alcohol can make jet lag worse.
- **Get up and move.** The NHS suggests stretching and walking around the cabin regularly.
- **Ask before taking sleeping pills.** The Yellow Book advises avoiding sedatives that stay in the body a long time. Talk to a doctor or pharmacist first.

Your own flight. Add the time zones to your departure time flying east, or take them away flying west, to get the destination time at takeoff. Add the flight length for the landing time. If at least 90 minutes of the flight fall between 11:00 PM and 7:00 AM at your destination, sleep then. If you land between those times with more of the night still ahead than you spent in it on board, stay awake and sleep when you arrive. Otherwise, stay awake.

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Figures as of Oct 2026 · latest at instacalc.co/learn/sleeping-on-a-plane.html

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