

The Essential Infant Resource Presents...



Scheduling Twins and Triplets: Two Tricks to Try

As you probably already know, I have not been blessed with twins, triplets, octoplets, or even duodecaplets (which is twelve, by the way).

However, I know many of you *have* been blessed with multiple babies. And you've emailed asking advice on the important subject of scheduling. You've got to write things down.

Regardless of which "trick" you decide to try first in setting up your routine, I strongly urge you not to try to "wing it" by memory. Personally, **I hate looking like an idiot** at the doctor's office when he asks about milk intake and bowel movements.

Save yourself some embarrassment and **gain some motherly pride** by using a reliable tracking system for these things.

If you don't already have a system, I laid out several popular tracking devices in issue #32 of *the Merry Mother*.

(Found at <http://www.aweber.com/b/1bWsB>, or you can email me at heather@the-essential-infant-resource-for-moms.com – whew! And I'll email it to you.)

Jumping in, **there are two main schools of thought** when it comes to scheduling multiple babies.

The first is to *synchronize* them, so they sleep, eat, and play at the same times.

The second is to *stagger* them and have one baby sleeping while the other is playing, etc.

So let's dissect them, shall we? And see which method you want to try first.



Trick No. 1 ~ Synchronize

This is the method of choice of Dr. Marc Weissbluth, in his book *Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Twins*. In this article, I'm simply going to lay out the general philosophy and a few basic suggestions on how to get started on a routine with this method.

If you like this system, pick up a copy of his book at the library or [Amazon](#). It will give you the more specific instructions and helpful trouble-shooting suggestions that I can't provide here.

He also provides helpful information in his book on...

- When to *start* sleep training twins
- How to create a sleep training "team"
- Breastfeeding suggestions for juggling multiples

The Premature Factor

I especially appreciate that Dr. Weissbluth very specifically **ties his suggestions to the due date, and not the date of delivery**.

Since multiples are often born premature, it's harder to follow traditional sleeping and eating suggestions. For example, although your babies are three months old, they were born 3 weeks early, so, technically, they won't be at the three month level until they're almost four months.

Dr. Weissbluth considers this often-missed point and provides excellent guidance on how much a *premature* 3 month old should be sleeping.

He also points out that premature babies are more likely, statistically, to have gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), and need frequent, small-volume feedings to prevent vomiting. His routines and schedules keep that important fact in mind.

Synchronized Eating

The first thing you should try to synchronize is the eating. In the beginning, discuss with your doctor how frequently your babies will need to feed. Usually that's every 2.5 to 3 hours.

When you feed one, feed both. Even if one baby wakes up in the middle of the night to eat, feed both.

Dr. Weissbluth says... *The old principle "never wake a sleeping baby to feed" doesn't apply to twins.*

Synchronized Day Sleeping (Naps)

Much of the rhythm of your routine will look similar than those principles I laid out in *The Merry Mother* issue.

You will put them down drowsy, but awake. (Dr. Weissbluth also provides a helpful list of “cues” to help you determine whether your babies are “tired” or moving to the red-zone of “overtired”.)

The guiding principle of synchronized sleeping is this: **one down, both down.** .

Even if only one baby seems tired, they both go down. Even if you have to separate them, putting one in the crib and one in a playpen or other safe sleeping area, they BOTH should go down for a nap.

They obviously won't have *exactly* the same sleeping scheduling, to the minute. You just want them in the same ballpark, and don't worry if they're not sitting in the same seat.

Specifically, if one is up in the morning, wake up the other. And if one wakes from a nap, wake up the other.

The rule breaker for this would be if, perhaps, one twin had caught a cold and is having a hard time with coughing in the middle of the night. The following day, allow the sicker twin's rhythm and needs set the standard for the day.

This could be done by letting that twin sleep a little bit longer in the morning (30 minutes max). This allows that twin to catch up on some sleep, while you have some one-on-one time with the healthy twin.

According to Dr. Weissbluth, most parents of twins advise that if there's **one time to be absolutely rigid in trying to synchronize sleep schedules**, it's the morning nap. They observe that if they can synchronize the morning nap, the rest of the day's sleeping schedule goes much more smoothly.

Synchronized Night Sleeping

As you're trying to synchronize their sleeping, one of your twins will probably cry or fuss (if not both). In the long run, it is Dr. Weissbluth's experience that one crying twin does not disrupt the sleep of the other twin.

He provides several techniques in how to soothe the crying twin, while still implementing the synchronized sleeping schedule you have in place. Unfortunately, I don't have the room to go into those techniques here. Let me point you back to his book for those instructions.

Trick No. 2 ~ Stagger

If, for one reason or another, you've opted not to try to synchronize, another good method of scheduling multiples is to stagger the schedule.

Now, fast forward a bit to when they're two. Naturally, you still won't be staggering the schedule at that point. "Staggering" is a technique best used in the first 9 months or so, when the babies are most helpless and needy.

This is also **a great technique for single parents** or in situations where one parent is gone most of the day and a "team" of helpers is not available.

This philosophy is the primary focus of the late Tracy Hogg, author of *Secrets of the Baby Whisperer*.

(Again, if you're going to work with this method, pick up a copy at your local library or at [Amazon](#) for more specific instructions and help. There are also some very specific schedules in her book to help in creating your own.)

She believed staggering twins was an important part of **connecting with each as an individual twin** and not as the collective *twins*.

In this method, you follow the schedule guidelines I discuss in my article. However, you stagger one of the babies so he's following the schedule approximately 30-45 minutes *behind* the other twin.

So, if you are feeding Haley at 7:00, you would let Joseph sleep until 7:30 until he wakes up to eat. This pattern would continue throughout the day.

Obviously, writing down the schedules for both babies is imperative. You absolutely cannot do a stagger schedule without having a written plan. There are just too many balls in the air to juggle, and you're bound to drop one.

Yes, your twins are going to be challenging to get on a routine. (Statistically, identical twins are easier to schedule than fraternal.)

However, besides the fact that your babies will have a playmate at their fingertips the rest of their lives (which is definitely a bonus for you!), the blessing of multiple babies just cannot be overstated. **The work is definitely worth it.**

