

The 5 S's



From Harvey Karp. Triggers the calming reflex in young infants.



Most effective in the first 3–4 months — combined, not alone.



Side/stomach is for soothing only.
Back to sleep, always.

The five techniques

- ▶ Swaddle — tight wrap mimics womb containment and dampens the Moro reflex. Stop swaddling at the first signs of rolling (around 3–4 months).
- ▶ Side or stomach — held position calms the vestibular system. Always put baby on the BACK to sleep.
- ▶ Shush — loud shushing near the ear (white noise level, louder than you'd expect).
- ▶ Swing — rhythmic motion: jiggling, walking, bouncing on a ball.
- ▶ Suck — pacifier, breast, or bottle for the sucking reflex.

How to use them

- ▶ Layer them. Five together work much better than any one alone.
- ▶ Sequence matters less than combining them — find your baby's preferred order.
- ▶ Use safe-sleep swaddles or sleep sacks with arms in. No loose blankets.
- ▶ These don't replace responsive feeding — they help with non-hunger crying.

Safety reminders

- ▶ Back to sleep, every time, for every nap and every night.
- ▶ Stop swaddling at the first signs of rolling.
- ▶ Loud shushing is fine for soothing; pull back from the ear once baby calms.
- ▶ If nothing is working, put baby down safely and reset.

Gaux Note

The 5 S's are evidence-supported soothing for the first 3–4 months. They don't replace feeding, sleep, or your gut. They give you a toolkit so the crying isn't all you have to work with.