

# Mass-Observation Project Autumn Directive 1999



## Part 1:

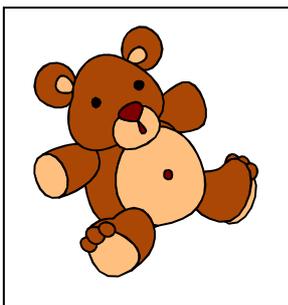
### Sleeping and dreaming

Mass-Observation has always been interested in people's sleeping patterns. In 1940 and 1941, the concern was with how people coped during the air raids, and whether anxiety about the war interfered with their sleep. The interest in dreams was even earlier. In 1937, Mass-Observers were asked to record their dreams in a diary. We have reports of dreams which relate to wartime themes, including a wonderful account sent in by an elderly lady who frequently dreamed she took tea with Hitler.

You may have seen some recent press reports on sleep research from Canada suggesting that people in Britain do not get "enough" sleep and that this affects both their mental and physical health. The researchers criticise the notion that sleep is for wimps (I seem to remember that Mrs Thatcher seemed to survive on almost no sleep). So this directive is designed to get you writing about what YOU think about sleep, and how it fits into your everyday life.

Most of you already know that the questions below are just prompts to get you thinking, but for all the new people who have joined us, please remember that you can write as much (or as little) as you wish, and that you should feel free to add in your own points even if they are not covered here. What follows is only a general guide....

*As usual, please remember to start your reply with a very brief mini-biography: your M-O number, (NOT name), sex, age, marital status, town or village where you live and your occupation or former occupation.*



### Sleep when you were a child

Please start at the beginning.... what do you remember about your childhood and bedtime? Did you have a strict routine? Where did you sleep? How long did you sleep? Did you have any special "aids" to get you off - blankets, teddies, toys? Did you have a bedtime story? How did it change as you got older?



## Changes over the years

You may like to describe these changes at this point, or incorporate them into your answers below. For example, if you have had periods of insomnia which are now over, you may want to write about that separately. Patterns may have changed as your daily life changes: transitions from school to work and from employment to being based at home, or during illnesses, or after retirement.

If you are (or have been) a parent of young children, or a carer of someone needing attention at night, please include something about how that has affected your sleep. If you work nightshifts (or did once) please also describe the impact on your sleeping patterns.

## Your sleep now

The prompts below are intended to help you describe your typical pattern at the moment - if you have one.

### Going to bed:

Do you have a routine? Does it vary according to other activities, eg days off work? at weekends? where you are? whom you are with?

Do you have any special techniques for going to sleep? food or drink? alcohol? music? TV or radio? baths or showers? other forms of relaxation? medication? sex? massage? If you read in bed, please note what kind of reading matter you prefer.

### As you sleep:

What kind of sleeper are you? Light/heavy? What disturbs you?

If you share a bed with someone else, does that work out well or do you disturb one another?

What kind of bed do you have? Small/large? Shared/single? High/low? Blankets or duvets? Special pillows? Is it exactly what you want or would you like it to be different?



What is your ideal sleep-inducing situation?

Describe your bedroom? Is it cool or warm? Do you prefer some light or darkness? Is it quiet where you live? Do you prefer silence or some noise?

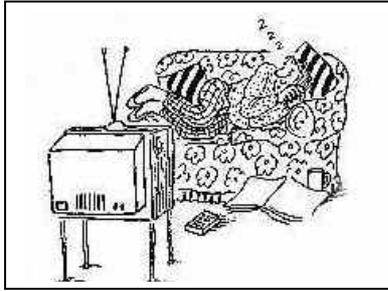
### When you wake:

Do you need an alarm clock or wake up call? How do you feel when you wake up? Rested? How much sleep do you think you need to feel well?



### Napping:

All the above assumes you do your sleeping in a bedroom at night. But maybe this doesn't apply to you! If you sleep at other times and in other places, please say so.



Do you take naps during the day? Where? When? For how long?  
Do they refresh you?

Do you sleep on journeys? Car drivers, or any professional drivers among you: how do you handle sleepiness en route?  
What about regulations for HGV drivers?

Do you fall asleep by accident? What sends you off in the daytime? Have you any techniques for staying awake?

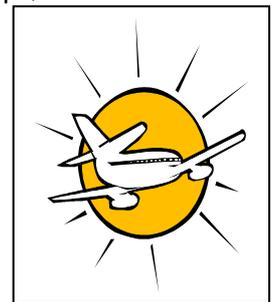
## Away from home:

How well do you adapt to sleeping in strange surroundings? For example: on holiday? at friends' or relations? in hospital?

If you have a partner, does being apart from him/her make a difference? Perhaps, like Paul and Linda McCartney, you have never been apart overnight?

## Jetlag

Have you ever experienced this? Please describe when it occurred and why, and what it felt like. Do you have any remedies or tips for travellers?

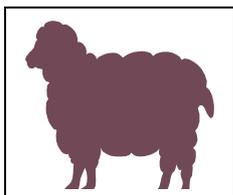


## Clocks changing

How well do you cope sleep-wise when the clocks go backwards or forwards?

## Children and bedtime

What are your views (or actual practices if you are responsible for children and young people) on sleep and youth? Do you think there is a proper time for children to go to bed? Do you (or did you) have special routines for your own children?



## Sleeping problems

Have you ever talked or walked at night? Do you snore? Do you suffer from insomnia? If so, how have you coped? If you have ever used any mind games (counting sheep?) to get off to sleep, please describe them.

Have you received medical help? Have you ever been to a sleep laboratory?

What was it like and did it help?

## Your views in general

To sum up: how important do you think having a certain amount of sleep is for well-being? What is that amount? Do you think some people need more sleep than others? Do you think we need sleep? If you do, can you say why?

## Dreaming

Could you just spend a little time describing any patterns you are aware of having. Do you have any recurrent dreams? Please describe.

Do you think dreams mean something? If you do, please say a little about how you interpret your dreams. Have you ever had a dream that came true?

How do you define a nightmare? Can you recall any?

