NEWS LESSON

Can Your Sleep Score Change How Tired You Feel?



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Would a poor sleep score change how you felt about a good night's sleep?
2. What makes health information useful rather than worrying?
3. Would you rather follow a device or how you felt in the morning?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**analyse**	☐	A	to look at something carefully to understand it
2	**wearable**	☐	B	messages or signs that something sends out
3	**estimate**	☐	C	the feeling of not being sure about something
4	**precise**	☐	D	a guess about a number or amount, not an exact figure
5	**clinicians**	☐	E	doctors and nurses who treat patients
6	**uncertainty**	☐	F	exact and correct in every detail
7	**advantages**	☐	G	good things about a plan or an idea
8	**signals**	☐	H	made to be worn on your body

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

Trackers estimate sleep from movement and heart rate, but the numbers look more certain than they really are. In 2017, researchers gave that worry a name.

1 Going to bed used to involve a pillow, a blanket and the hope of waking up refreshed. Today, a smartwatch may analyse the night and deliver a score before breakfast. For some people, the information is helpful. For others, it creates a new source of worry: what if they are not sleeping well enough?

2 A sleep score might look precise, but it is still an estimate produced by a device. Seeing a low number can make someone feel disappointed before they have even got out of bed.

3 Researchers described the term orthosomnia in a 2017 article in the Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine. They reported patients who became preoccupied with the apparently imperfect sleep recorded by wearable devices. Some trusted their tracker data so strongly that they questioned their own experience of feeling rested. These were particular patients described by clinicians, not a picture of everyone who wears a tracker.

4 The technology has improved, but sleep is still difficult to measure precisely outside a clinical setting. Consumer devices estimate sleep stages and duration using signals such as movement and heart rate. Their reports can be useful for spotting patterns, yet they are not equivalent to a medical sleep assessment.

5 The difficulty is that people cannot simply decide to sleep perfectly. Trying to control every detail may turn bedtime into a stressful routine. Someone who checks a score immediately after waking might begin the day worrying about a problem they would otherwise not have noticed. That does not mean technology has no value. A tracker might help people spot patterns, provided they remember that feeling rested matters more than winning a competition against yesterday's statistics.

6 There are advantages to monitoring, particularly when it encourages consistent routines or helps someone explain symptoms to a healthcare professional. The danger creeps in when the measurement becomes more important than sleep itself. Persistent difficulty sleeping deserves proper assessment, regardless of whether an app considers the night successful.

7 There is also a psychological reason these scores feel persuasive. A precise number creates an impression of certainty, even when the measurement involves estimation and interpretation. Someone who sees an apparently poor result may start noticing ordinary tiredness more carefully and connecting it to the score. Another person could become unusually confident about their sleep because the device offers a positive rating.

8 Neither response necessarily reflects what a clinician would conclude. Healthy tracking therefore involves understanding uncertainty and resisting the temptation to interpret one night in isolation. It can be useful to look out for broad patterns over time, particularly when those patterns are discussed with a professional. But a number should never be allowed to replace the person's symptoms, circumstances and experience.

9 Perhaps we should treat sleep technology like other health tools: useful when it informs a reasonable decision, unhelpful when it creates endless pressure. Rest should be something we experience, not merely a number we try to improve.

Sources: Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. A positive rating from a tracker can mislead a person just as a negative one can. T F NG
2. The 2017 article showed that everyone who wears a tracker develops orthosomnia. T F NG
3. Most of the patients in the 2017 article were over fifty. T F NG
4. A good score means a person with long-term sleep problems does not need to see a professional. T F NG
5. Some patients in the 2017 reports trusted their device more than their own feelings. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

assessment **circumstances** **equivalent** **impression** **interpretation** **monitoring** **symptoms** **temptation**

1. A doctor will carry out a full _____ before deciding whether a patient has a sleep disorder.
2. Many people find it hard to resist the _____ to check their phone as soon as they wake up.
3. The shop assistant gave the _____ that the watch was waterproof, but it was not.
4. Headaches and tiredness are common _____ of stress.
5. Hospitals use _____ equipment to watch a patient's heart rate through the night.
6. Your decision should depend on your personal _____ , such as your job and family.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. By the time the alarm rang, she _____ twice during the night. (WAKE)
2. Sleep reports _____ to the user's phone every morning. (SEND)
3. If I were you, I _____ one night's score. (NOT TRUST)
4. The term orthosomnia _____ in a 2017 article by clinicians. (DESCRIBE)
5. So far, I _____ a tracker, but I'm thinking about it. (NOT USE)

7 Language focus: linking words

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Check what follows the gap: a noun phrase (despite), a clause (whereas, provided), or a new sentence after a full stop (nevertheless).

despite	nevertheless	otherwise	provided	regardless	therefore	whereas

1. _____ the improvements in technology, sleep is still hard to measure outside a clinic.
2. Tracking can be useful, _____ users remember that the numbers are only estimates.
3. A watch can detect movement. _____ , it cannot know how you feel.
4. Some users feel anxious after a poor score, _____ others feel proud after a high one.
5. Persistent sleep problems need assessment, _____ of what the app says.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. What should a sleep tracker tell someone besides a score?
2. When does measuring a habit stop helping?
3. Would you try a week without checking your sleep data?

9 Role-play: should we try a sleep tracker?

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the tracker fan

You wear a smartwatch and check your sleep score every morning. You think the numbers help you. Explain why, and try to persuade your partner to wear one for a week.

Student B · the sceptic

You don't use a tracker. You think scores can make people worry. Ask questions, say what worries you, then decide: yes, no, or yes with a condition.

Useful phrases

I check my score every morning.
It helps me see my habits.
Don't you think it can make you worry?
I'm not sure the numbers are always right.
I'd try it for a week if I didn't have to check it daily.
Could we agree on one week and then talk again?

Afterwards, tell the class: will your partner try a tracker, and why?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 A · 2 H · 3 D · 4 F · 5 E · 6 C · 7 G · 8 B

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 F · 5 T

5 Vocabulary

1 assessment · 2 temptation · 3 impression · 4 symptoms · 5 monitoring · 6 circumstances

6 Verb forms

1 had woken · 2 are sent · 3 wouldn't trust or would not trust · 4 was described · 5 haven't used or have not used

7 Language focus

1 Despite · 2 provided · 3 Nevertheless · 4 whereas · 5 regardless

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