



IF YOUR DREAMS SEEM JUMBLED AND NONSENSICAL, IT'S BECAUSE THE COMMON THEME IS USUALLY EMOTIONAL, NOT LOGICAL.

## Boost your recall!

1 Turn off the alarm. Sound and movement—like hitting “snooze”—can wipe out your dream memory. “If you wake naturally, you’ll likely be in a long REM period—the right time to remember a dream,” says Cartwright. “It’s the end of the night, so the dream will be the most interesting, emotionally intense one.”

2 You can’t move during your most vivid dreams, so don’t move when you wake either. “Keep your eyes closed too,” Cartwright says. “Prolonging the physiological state of dreaming makes it easier to relive the last one.”

3 Jot down a title for your dream—“Surfing in Mexico”—and the most intense emotion you experienced. This can enhance recall, especially if you rarely remember dreams, says Cartwright.

4 Read this page and discuss. “Talking about dreams leads people to remember them,” says Howard Katz, M.D. of the Boston Psychoanalytic Society & Institute.

## What exactly are dreams?

Nobody’s sure, but they may be the result of your brain defragging. “Dreams are probably processing the same thoughts, fears, and hopes that you have while awake. Much of it is nonproductive,” says Harvard psychologist Deirdre Barrett, Ph.D., author of *The Committee of Sleep*. “But you’re also consolidating memories, anticipating dangers, and solving problems.” Scientists used to think dreaming happened only during REM (rapid eye movement) sleep, the phase when your brain is most active and your body is paralyzed. New research proves otherwise; REM dreams are simply the most vivid and memorable because the part of your brain that rules your emotions, the amygdala, is in overdrive.



# Dreams

WHAT THEY MEAN, HOW THEY WORK, AND WHY YOU'RE HOOKING UP WITH YOUR HOT NEIGHBOR



ACTIONS, PEOPLE, AND WORDS CAN BE DISTORTED IN DREAMS, BUT MUSIC NEVER IS.

### Most Common Dream Themes

GOING TO SCHOOL  
SEEING SOMEONE YOU LIKE  
BEING CHASED  
BEING BLAMED/PUNISHED

## I \_\_\_\_ in my sleep. Weird?

**CRY** Unless it happens regularly, don’t worry. “Dreams cut across the whole range of emotions,” says Barrett. But if you habitually sob while you snooze, it could indicate depression.

**WALK** Sleepwalking is often linked to stress or sleep deprivation, says Barrett. “It can be induced by anything that messes with the sleep cycle.” It’s usually not a problem; however, frequent nocturnal wandering is associated with depression, alcoholism, and insomnia, a recent Stanford study found.

**TALK** More than half of people talk in their sleep, a Canadian study found. It’s not a cause for concern unless you disturb your bedmate (or moan her sister’s name).

## Have a sex dream—every night!

1 The more men fantasize about sex, the more frequently they have erotic dreams, a German study reveals. “If you just fantasize, you haven’t reached a conclusion. That may happen in sleep,” says Rosalind Cartwright, Ph.D., author of *The Twenty-Four Hour Mind*. Hint: Save your masturbation for the morning.

2 Try this position in bed: A 2012 study in the journal *Dreaming* shows that sleeping facedown may increase your frequency of sex dreams. Why? The pressure on your penis signals pleasure.

3 Take a sex siesta. “During naps, there’s a closer association between your waking brain and sleeping brain,” says Barrett. Put your sexual fantasy on repeat as you doze off: Calling up a dream topic works about 50 percent of the time, she says.

### Most Common Sex Dreams

INTERCOURSE  
SEXUAL PROPOSITIONS  
MAKING OUT  
FANTASIES



LIBERAL MEN ARE MORE LIKELY THAN CONSERVATIVE MEN TO RECALL SEX DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES.

## Three dreams that may mean something

**FLYING** You’re probably an out-of-the-box thinker, says Cartwright. Or it could be purely physical:

“As you move toward waking, you become more aware you’re paralyzed,” says Boston University neurologist Patrick McNamara, Ph.D. “This, paradoxically, lets you fly: Your mind can soar because your body can’t interfere.”

**FALLING** “It’s a metaphor for a high-stress event—for example, the loss of a job,” says McNamara.

**FAILING AN EXAM** “The fear of failing in school is a strong, long-term memory,” says Cartwright. “It can be reactivated by a current experience of not measuring up.”



MEN DREAM MORE OFTEN ABOUT MEN THAN ABOUT WOMEN. BLAME PRIMITIVE MAN, WHO MAY HAVE PRACTICED DEFENDING AGAINST ENEMIES IN HIS DREAMS.