



Telling the Truth

What to do when your child doesn't

You & Your Child

A guide for
new parents

Most children learn very early that doing something like breaking a lamp will make you angry and might get them punished.

"I didn't do it" is something children may say when that happens. Then, they may make up a story to explain how the lamp got broken, or blame it on someone else.

Encourage telling the truth.

Children may not always know what is true and what is false.

Young children may know something bad has happened. And from experience, they know this might make you angry.

But they probably haven't learned it is important to tell the truth. You need to encourage your child to tell the truth. And your child needs to learn how to take responsibility for his or her actions.

ON BACK
TELLING THE TRUTH CAN BE
DIFFICULT TO TEACH. BUT THERE
ARE STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO
HELP



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WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR CHILD DOESN'T TELL THE TRUTH

First, be calm

It is difficult for your child to learn to tell the truth if you are upset. Remain calm when you discover a problem.

Here is what to do when a problem arises. For example, if your child broke a lamp, here is how you could go about getting your child to admit to it.

- Start with what you see. Say, "What's this? Is the lamp broken?" It is much easier for a child to describe what you both see than it is to admit that he or she did it.
- Then ask, "How did this happen?" Your child may make up an explanation like, "It just fell over." Tell your child why that isn't true. "Lamps don't fall by themselves."

Calmly ask if your child did it

Be calm, look your child in the eye and, in a quiet voice, ask: "Did you do this?"

If your child makes up a story or blames someone else, put your child on your lap and say, "It's very important for me to know what really happened?"

Then wait until your child admits to it. If you know your child did it but won't admit it, say you are disappointed he or she won't tell you.

Encourage your child to tell the truth

For example, when your child admits to knocking over the lamp, you can say, "I'm not happy about the broken lamp. But I'm glad you told me the truth." Hold and comfort your child. He or she may be very afraid. Say, "I'm glad you told me the truth."



WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR CHILD DOESN'T TELL THE TRUTH

Remember, children must take responsibility for their actions

If your child has told the truth, say: "Because you told me the truth, I will help you clean up the broken lamp."

If your child doesn't tell the truth, say, "If you don't tell me the truth, you have to clean it up yourself. But if you tell the truth, I will help. What do you want to tell me?"

Even if it was an accident, your child must take responsibility. Say, "Accidents will happen, but we still have to clean up the broken lamp."

Reward your child for telling the truth

Do this any time your child tells the truth, not just in a crisis.

Reward even when he or she admits doing something that you didn't see or know about.

For example, if your child says, "I spilled my milk, but I wiped it up." You say, "Thank you for telling me the truth. I'm proud you cleaned it up already."

Use the word truth a lot. It will help your child understand what it means and learn that telling the truth is important.

- It is natural for children not to tell the truth when they know that what they did will make you angry or get them punished.
- When your child says, "I didn't do it," always remain calm.
- You must teach your children to tell the truth and to take responsibility for what they do.

