



Lying Summary

Why Lying?

Trust is an essential foundation for healthy relationships. There are intentional ways to grow a healthy parent-child relationship, and understanding how to promote trust in your child, where they tell you and others the truth, is key.

Tip These steps are done best when you and your child are not tired or in a rush.

Tip Intentional communication and a healthy parenting relationship support these steps.

Step 1. Get Your Child Thinking by Getting Their **Input**

- *"Who do you trust and why?"*
- *"What's important to you about honesty?"*
- *"When are you tempted to lie?"*
- *"What's the worst thing that could happen if you tell the truth about a misbehavior?"*

Discuss challenges. In Step 2, plan to teach what they can do instead.

Step 2. **Teach** New Skills by Interactive Modeling

- Model honesty. Modeling honesty could be sharing aloud what you are thinking when you are saying how you feel. *"I am tempted to say that I feel just fine in response to your 'How are you?' But, the truth is that I am upset about a conversation I had at work and I can't seem to get it off my mind."*
- Teach your child to take a breath before answering a question. This gives your child a moment to allow their thinking brain to catch up with their reactive/emotional brain and allows them the opportunity to share a more honest response.
- Help set your child up for success by asking the right questions. Instead of *"Did you do this?"* ask, *"Tell me what happened?"*
- Talk with your child about the impact of their lies on you. Say, *"I am sad that there is something about our relationship that isn't safe enough that you feel you need to lie to me."*
- Detect lying with others. Learning about why and how others lie can help children learn about their own lying.
- Catch your child telling you the truth. *"I know it was hard to tell me the truth, and I appreciate you being honest."*
- Talk about trust and how it is built slowly but can be broken quickly.

- Learn about how your child morally develops (see full tool). Understanding their stage will help you offer language and support to teach from their perspective.
- Teach positive behaviors when you identify misbehaviors. Children are most tempted to lie when they make a poor choice or mistake. Consider: “What positive behavior can I teach my child to replace what I’ve told them not to do?”
- Discuss the value of truth. At a family meal, share a personal story about how trust between family members has been critical to an important situation. Ask: “*How do you come up with alternative solutions when you are tempted to lie?*”

Trap Children who fear punishment when they misbehave are prone to lie to cover up their mistakes. Part of modeling as parents requires learning more about how to teach responsibility and self-discipline through alternative strategies.

Tip Play the game Two Truths and a Lie where a person offers three simple statements, one of which is a lie to see if the other can guess which one is false. Learn first together about body language signals that reveal a lie.

Step 3. **Practice** to Grow Skills and Develop Habits

- Use “Show me…” statements like, “*Show how you can tell me about a mistake you made. Mistakes are part of learning.*”
- Follow up when your child lies to help repair harm. If they know there are action steps they can take to make things better after a poor choice, they are far less likely to feel the need for lying.
- Find opportunities to help your child mend relationships. Siblings offer a regular chance to practice this!
- Recognize effort. “*I notice how you told me when you broke the vase. I appreciate your honesty!*”
- Focus on the logical consequences of dishonesty.
- Discuss characters in stories.
- Proactively remind. “*Remember, we tell the truth even when we make mistakes and then, we’ll figure out the rest together.*”

Tip The best way to turn around a misbehavior that may be taking place is by recognizing when and how your child makes good choices and acts positively in similar circumstances. Children need to learn what to do as well as what not to do.

Step 4. **Support** Your Child’s Development and Success

- Ask key questions. “*How do you feel about making that decision?*” or “*What does your heart or inner voice tell you?*” or “*What are some options if you break a rule?*”
- Reflect on outcomes. “*Remember when you broke your Grandma’s glasses? You told her you were sorry, and she said she knew it was an accident and had them repaired. It was all okay, and we appreciate your honesty.*”
- Stay engaged. Ask yourself if you need to reteach or make changes.
- Engage in further practice. Create more opportunities to practice when all is calm.
- Follow through on logical consequences to repair trust when needed.

Step 5. **Recognize** Effort and Quality to Foster Motivation

- Notice even small successes. *“I noticed you told me when you forgot your scarf at Mitchell’s. I appreciate you telling me.”*
- Recognize small steps along the way.
- Build celebrations into your routine. Encourage opportunities for fun and further connection.

Recommended Citation: Center for Health and Safety Culture. (2020). *Lying Summary. Ages 5-10*. Retrieved from <https://www.ParentingMontana.org>.