



## Why kids lie

Want a truthful answer? Its all in how you ask the question.

"My son Jack lied to me and he's only five. What can I do?" This is a common problem for most parents. Before you can work out the best way to handle this situation, you need to understand why kids lie.

Kids lie mainly because they want to avoid getting into trouble. Let's say you come home and find your favourite vase broken in the hallway. Jack knows you're angry and upset, so when you ask "Jack, did you do this?" his brain runs through the two options yes and no. If he answers yes and mum is angry he may think hell get into lots of trouble, but if he says no he can avoid an angry mum. Hmmm I'd better go with no he reasons. But once he says no, you sense that he's lying and ask a series of questions to get the truth. Generally though, once kids have told the first lie, they continue lying to keep it all going. Then the whole situation gets worse

What if you simply asked your question in a different way? Instead of saying "Did you break the vase?", describe the facts. "I see the vase has been knocked over and broken. Can you tell me what happened?" This avoids the whole Did you do it? question, giving them time to explain the whole story. It saves you having to ask a series of questions and takes away the yes or no dilemma, where saying no seems like an easy way out.

Next you need to find out if what happened was an accident or done deliberately. Children should never get in trouble for something accidental. They will feel bad enough already, so just help them clean up the mess or fix the vase. If it was deliberate, however, then there should be fair consequences for their actions. Beware the situation when your child tells you the truth about something they did deliberately. If your punishment is too harsh, the lesson learned may be that coming forward and telling the truth was a bad idea!

Another thing you should consider when dealing with your child's lies is how often you lie yourself. Even white lies that we adults tell are seen as regular lies by children. Why did you say you were just on your way out when you weren't? As a parent you're the most important role model for your child, so take care with the example you set.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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