



How to Handle Lies and “Sticky Fingers”

For Children over age 3, *follow these steps:

1. Stay calm

Think before you respond to avoid overreacting. Never hit or shake a child – this only teaches that violence is ok.

2. Find out why your child misbehaved

A child’s “reasoning” process is still a work in progress. Ask questions to uncover your child’s real motives. If you think your child is stretching the truth, ask “is that a true or make-believe story?” If your child “finds” a new possession, ask who it should be returned to.

3. Explain why the behavior is wrong

For example, tell your child:

- “Lies hurt people’s feelings”
- “It’s hard to trust someone who lies or takes things”
- “We can’t have everything we want”
- “Don’t take things that belong to someone else. Ask an adult if you may borrow something.”

4. Decide if punishment is needed

Your response should vary, depending on your child’s age and the situation. For example, you could:

- Remove a privilege from a young child
- Ask a school-age child to write a letter of apology

If your child took something from someone, have your child return it

5. Say “I love you”

Tell your child that you didn’t like his or her behavior. Then explain that you will always love him or her

**Responding to toddlers (under age 3)*

Remember, these little ones think the world revolves around them – and their needs and desires. This is normal and healthy, and doesn’t mean they are being bad on purpose. Stay calm and gently encourage telling the truth. Don’t accuse or punish. A toddler’s mind is easily overwhelmed, so keep rules simple.