



# BUSTED!

## how to spot a liar

Your friend swears she didn't spread that nasty rumor about you, but another bud claims she's guilty. How can you tell who's lying and who's a true friend? Check out these tips for trapping a big, fat fibber.

### truth tips: sure signs someone's pants are on fire!

Everybody knows the saying, "Liar, liar, pants on fire..." but spotting a fibber isn't as easy as checking your friend's pants for burn marks. Fortunately, there are some obvious clues to point you to the truth. Look for these body language lie-busters the next time you think somebody's trying to pull one over on you.

the eyes tell all	hiding the truth	acting awards	falsetto fibs
It's usually hard for liars to look you in the eye while saying something they know isn't true. Are your friend's eyes focused on you or are they looking at the floor? Fibbers also blink a lot (subconsciously hiding their eyes) or their gaze may dart around the room.	A fibber might unwillingly hide a body part (even her mouth) when she's telling a lie. If a friend touches her mouth while talking, covers one hand or leg with the other, touches her face too much or bites her lip, she could be telling a tall tale.	Look for major overacting—getting really angry or really sad is cause to suspect a story isn't true. Liars try to seem more believable, like putting a hand over their hearts, "swearing" to the truth. Or, shaking their heads "no" while claiming a statement is totally true.	A person's voice can also be a good lie detector. Does your pal suddenly start talking faster or ultraslow? Does her tone go up and down, or is she clearing her throat a lot? Either your bud is coming down with a bad sore throat or she's lying.

Illustration | Steve Vance.

### fibs and the fakes who tell them

Not all lies are equal! There's the little one your best bud tells you when she's trying to reassure you no one will notice the zit on your nose. Then there are the huge lies, like when your so-called friend borrows your cutest tee (the one she's always wanted) and afterwards swears she can't find it anywhere. Read on to see which lies—and liars—are forgivable and which are supersinful.

the white liar	the exaggerator	the trouble avoider	the compulsive liar
<p>We've all told a "little white lie." This is the kind your guy says when you ask, "Do these pants make my butt look big?" He's not about to say yes even if it's true! The best way to deal is to not ask questions you don't want to hear the true answers to!</p> <p><b>truth?</b> This type of lie is absolutely forgivable when it saves feelings from being hurt. But stretching the definition to cover a more serious untruth is uncool. For example, when your bud hears that you were flirting with her boyfriend, it'll hurt her feelings for sure! Deceiving her doesn't count as a white lie no matter how much you wish it did.</p>	<p>Your friend claims, "I get about 15 IMs from guys every night." Truth, lie or exaggeration? Maybe she gets a few, but saying 15 makes her feel more important. Usually people who constantly stretch the truth don't feel very good about who they are.</p> <p><b>truth?</b> Believe it or not, there really is a difference between a lie and an exaggeration, so this type of fibbing is usually pretty forgivable. But if a friend constantly relies on exaggerating to make herself feel better or look more important, you might want to remind her how great she really is. As her self-confidence grows, your pal's fibs should drop off.</p>	<p>Your best bud gets caught coming home after curfew, so she tells her parents, "My ride's car wouldn't start." The reality is she wanted to keep partying and had to make up a story to avoid getting in trouble for being late.</p> <p><b>truth?</b> This kind of lying is bad news and, deep down, everyone knows it. When her parents find out she lied ('rents always do!) your friend will be in big trouble for <i>both</i> coming home late and trying to deceive her folks. Actually, the easiest way to deal is to be honest. By telling the truth from the very beginning, the punishment will be a lot less severe—trust us.</p>	<p>This type of liar lies about anything, even stupid stuff no one cares about. "I wear a size 2," she says, when you can tell by looking at her that it's not true. "I'm totally a vegetarian," she claims, then orders a burger for lunch.</p> <p><b>truth?</b> Sometimes called pathological lying, this is when a person can't stop telling lies. She may not even know the difference between what's true and what's not. Know someone like this? Steer clear. Think you might have this problem? See your school counselor or ask your parents for help. Life's better when your folks and friends know they can count on you to be honest.</p>

### why lie?

Can you feel a fib coming on? Have you ever caught yourself making a false statement and you're not even sure why? Let's face it, everyone lies sometimes. We turned to Edward Gamarra, Ph.D., a psychology professor from Emory University, to find out why teens lie.

"I want to fit in..."	"This is who I am now..."	"I didn't think it was a lie..."
If you think telling half-truths will help you make friends, you might be right! It may be easier to feel part of a group by pretending to like certain things more than you actually do. Or, sharing a bit of gossip with your buds just to feel closer to 'em. Dr. Gamarra explains: "Teens will sometimes bond, united by a lie. Movies like <i>I Know What You Did Last Summer</i> are a version of this dynamic. The characters share a common crime and keep it a secret. Teens do this every day on a much smaller scale. They'll tell fibs simply to find solidarity in a time of insecurity."	Due to peer pressure or changing tastes, you might find yourself wanting to be someone different. Is it really such a big deal that you used to love Eminem, but now you're into Gwen Stefani? It's normal for your tastes to change, but becoming someone new requires a bit of lying, even if you're only lying to yourself. "Teens want to reinvent themselves," Dr. Gamarra says. "They create an idealized role for themselves. When they fail to keep up that idealized version, they must then lie to themselves about who they really are and that can become uncomfortable."	Believe it or not, there are actually times when it's hard to know what's the truth and what's not. "Many teens don't realize they're lying," Dr. Gamarra points out. "Students of mine often plagiarize whole sections of their [research] papers and look me straight in the face and claim the work as their own." For example, it's easy to "take" stuff off of the Internet and feel like it's now your own, including music downloads or other people's research. "They have never been taught the difference between original thought and copying," says Dr. Gamarra.