

Do Not

- Do not lecture or say that the child will be considered a thief or bad person
- Do not yell
- Do not use physical discipline – it could make the child angry and the behavior could get worse
- Do not humiliate the child

If Your Child Keeps Stealing

- If child continues to steal despite correction, consequence may need to become increasingly significant
- Get professional help – repeat offenses may indicate a bigger problem /sign of a problem with their emotional development
- Talk to a therapist, doctor, minister, school counselor or social worker, support group (National Association for Shoplifting Prevention or Cleptomanics and Shoplifters Anonymous)
- One third of juveniles caught shoplifting say it is difficult to quit (www.kidshealth.org)
- Children who repeatedly steal may also have difficulty with trusting others and forming close relationships
- Stealing may be an indication of a mental health issue such as depression or obsessive compulsive disorder. The child may be responding to trouble at home or school, to a specific loss, or feelings of being unloved
- Stealing may indicate a problem with low self esteem if the child is struggling with peer pressure
- Child may have an eating disorder if they are stealing large quantities of food

Preventing your Child from Stealing

- Be aware of where your child is, provide proper supervision
- Teach your child not to touch other people's property
- Teach your child how to get the desired item
- Make the child feel like an important part of the family
- Give your child what is needed for school and activities
- Teach values
- Develop a close relationship
- Ensure a regular source of income
- Set a good example
- Remove temptation

Questions to Ask your Child

- Tell me the reason you stole.
- What did you plan to do with...?
- What do you think happens to shoplifters once they have been caught?
- What problems does shoplifting create for stores?
- Do you have any advice for someone planning on shoplifting?
- How would you feel if someone stole a personal item of yours, a favorite toy, electronic device, or doll?
- How do you think the victim feels after you stole from them?

Resources

A Children's Book About Stealing, by Joy Berry

The Sparkle Thing, by Larry Dane Brimner 2002 – Girl steals from corner store

Dealing with Stealing, by Lisa Adams 2003 – Self help book for kids who steal

It Wasn't Me, by Udo Weigelt 2001 – Raven is falsely accused of stealing

Children's Book About Stealing, by Abigail Tyler 2013 – A kid's picture book about stealing with photos and fun facts.

Ricky Sticky Fingers, by Julia Cook 2012



1-888-866-8660

For the hearing and speech impaired with
TTY equipment call 1-888-556-5117

www.nebraskafamilyhelpline.ne.gov

- Trained counselors 24/7/365
- Children's behavioral issues
- Parent/child conflict resolution
- Youth mental health referrals

**Need help? Don't know where to start?
Dial 2-1-1 or go to www.ne211.org.**

Provided by LPS School Social Workers
BECAUSE FAMILIES MATTER



Why Do Children Steal?



The definition of stealing is the process of taking an object that does not belong to the child. The child must know what they did was wrong. It is normal for a very young child to take something that excites their interest. A child is usually three to five years of age before they understand ownership and that taking something which belongs to another person is wrong. School age children are very aware they are stealing.



Stealing

Kids of all ages, from preschoolers to teens can be tempted to steal for different reasons. Parents are naturally concerned when a child or teenager steals. The parent may worry about what caused the child to steal and if this is the first step to delinquent behavior. Whatever the reason, it is important to correct the problem before the offenses become more serious in nature. Knowing what lies behind the child's stealing helps you recognize patterns that may be occurring in other parts of his or her life. It also assists the parent in understanding possible needs that aren't being met in the child's life. The child may need to be taught the skills to meet these needs in socially appropriate and effective ways.

Children May Steal Because

- **Lack of proper understanding:** Young children may be unaware that it belongs to someone else or that they are doing something wrong or that the item costs money
- **Lack of self control:** They are attracted to things they do not own, impulsivity
- **Peer pressure:** Have a need to fit in
- **Get attention:** Lack of attention by parents
- **They have a poor role model:** Observe friend or sibling who steals
- **Lack of resources:** The child does not have the money to purchase a needed or desired item
- **Stealing may be a way to unconsciously get even with a parent:** Because they do not like the rules or punishments in the household
- **Anger:** When they are upset with someone more powerful than they are
- **Revenge:** Want to make the other person suffer, rebel against adults
- **Feeling of excitement:** For the adrenalin rush, for fun, to see if they can get away with it
- **Jealousy or desire:** Desire to have beautiful things, the latest gadget or toy or because they feel like others have more than they do



Adolescents May Steal Because

- The thrill
- Pressure from friends
- Believe they can get away with it
- Rebelling
- Angry
- Want attention, want to fit in
- Stress at home or school
- Cry for help due to abuse
- Can't afford something
- Support a drug habit
- High risk behavior



Dealing with Stealing

- Stay calm – it is no different than any other mistake your child has made
- Be firm
- Address the behavior immediately
- Inform the child that you know he has stolen something and that it is wrong
- Have the child make restitution, helping if need to. If the child stole money or an object from home – develop a plan for them to pay it back or work off the amount in chores to make amends to the person they stole from
- Accompany the child in returning the item to the person that it belongs to or pay off damages
- Explain that stealing is a crime and can lead to more serious consequences
- Make it clear that the behavior is unacceptable
- Talk to your child about how they would feel if someone stole from them
- Monitor the child more closely in the setting in which the stealing occurred

- Talk with your child to gain insight as to why
- Ask open ended questions to encourage your child to talk
- Problem solve with the child appropriate ways that he could obtain the item, make better choices
- Keep the child away from situations where you know stealing may be tempting
- Give the child a clean slate to start over
- Be a good role model – do not brag when a store forgot to charge you for an item and do not bring home items from your workplace to use at home, model honest behaviors
- Take immediate action
- Make amends
- Try to understand why they are stealing
- Acknowledge honest behavior in your child and compliment good decisions
- Keep older kids busy with sports, positive activities and after school jobs
- Find new activities for them with different friends that have a positive influence