



characterfirst  
education



elementary  
curriculum

# Honesty



# SECTION 1 Introduce Honesty

This curriculum offers approximately 3 hours of instruction, divided into 3 sections. Each section can be broken into smaller pieces if you prefer short lessons. For additional resources, visit [www.CharacterFirstEd.com](http://www.CharacterFirstEd.com).

## 3 WAYS TO BUILD HONESTY:

### Educate

Focus on honesty for a period of time. Use the lessons in this curriculum to talk about honesty and why it matters. Look for ways to emphasize honesty in other subjects, such as math, reading, language, history, social studies, science, music, health, and athletics.

### Evaluate

Think about daily decisions in the light of good character. Ask yourself and your students, "Is this the right thing to do?" Use the "I Wills" on page 4 as behavioral objectives, and refer to these standards when correcting negative attitudes and behavior.

### Celebrate

Catch people doing good and point out the character qualities they demonstrated. Children thrive on sincere encouragement, so don't overlook the little opportunities to praise each day!

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877.357.0001  
Printed in the U.S.A.  
Item: 04136

## DEFINE HONESTY (Discussion, 15 minutes)

**Point out and discuss key words in the definition. Review and commit the definition to memory. Use the Honesty Character Card (available at [www.CharacterFirstEd.com](http://www.CharacterFirstEd.com)) to remind or reward students who learn the definition.**

**Definition:** *Being truthful in what I say and do.*

The word *honesty* comes from the Latin *honestas*, meaning "honor received from others, moral integrity or uprightness." Being honest means you avoid saying or doing things that might damage your integrity or stain your reputation. Even "little" lies or exaggerations take away from someone's ability to trust you.

Honesty is more than just accurately reporting facts. Honesty includes what you say, but it also includes what you *don't* say. For example, if your mom asks, "Did you eat the cookies?" you could accurately say "no" if you just ate *one* cookie. But that would be deceitful.

Honesty also includes your actions. For example, to cheat on a test is to pretend you know the answers when you really don't. Or to steal candy from a store is to act like you paid for it when you really didn't. Honesty means saying and doing what is true, not false.

### Related concepts:

Truthfulness, trustworthiness, integrity, sincerity, genuine, factual, faithful, reliable

### Discussion:

- How do you feel when someone lies to you?
- How can telling one lie lead to more lies? How can this cause problems?
- If someone lies or makes a mistake, what does that person need to do in order to make it right?
- What is the opposite of honesty? (Being deceptive, lying, cheating, manipulating.) When is it tempting to cheat or lie about something?

**"Truth always rises above falsehood, as oil rises above water."** —Miguel de Cervantes



## PASS IT ON

(Game, 15 minutes)

Show students how information can get confused as it goes around, and why it's important to check the facts.

Arrange students in a line or circle. Whisper a message into one person's ear, and let that person quietly pass the message to the next person. Keep whispering the message from one person to the next until it reaches the last person. Ask the last person to say the message out loud in order to compare it with the original message.

### Sample Messages:

- Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.
- She sells sea shells by the seashore.
- Six slick snakes slowly slithered southward.
- Being honest helps you gain others' trust.
- I will be truthful in what I say and do.

This game shows that you can't believe everything you hear. Take responsibility to check the facts so you don't spread rumors or false information.

Additional resources at  
[www.CharacterFirstEd.com](http://www.CharacterFirstEd.com)

## MEASURE UP

(Exploration, 15 minutes)

Use a tape measure or ruler to illustrate how being honest is essential for building trust.

You can trust a tape measure to tell you the truth because the marks on a tape measure don't lie. They stay the same no matter what you're measuring. They don't change their story or bend the truth to make something seem bigger or smaller than it really is.

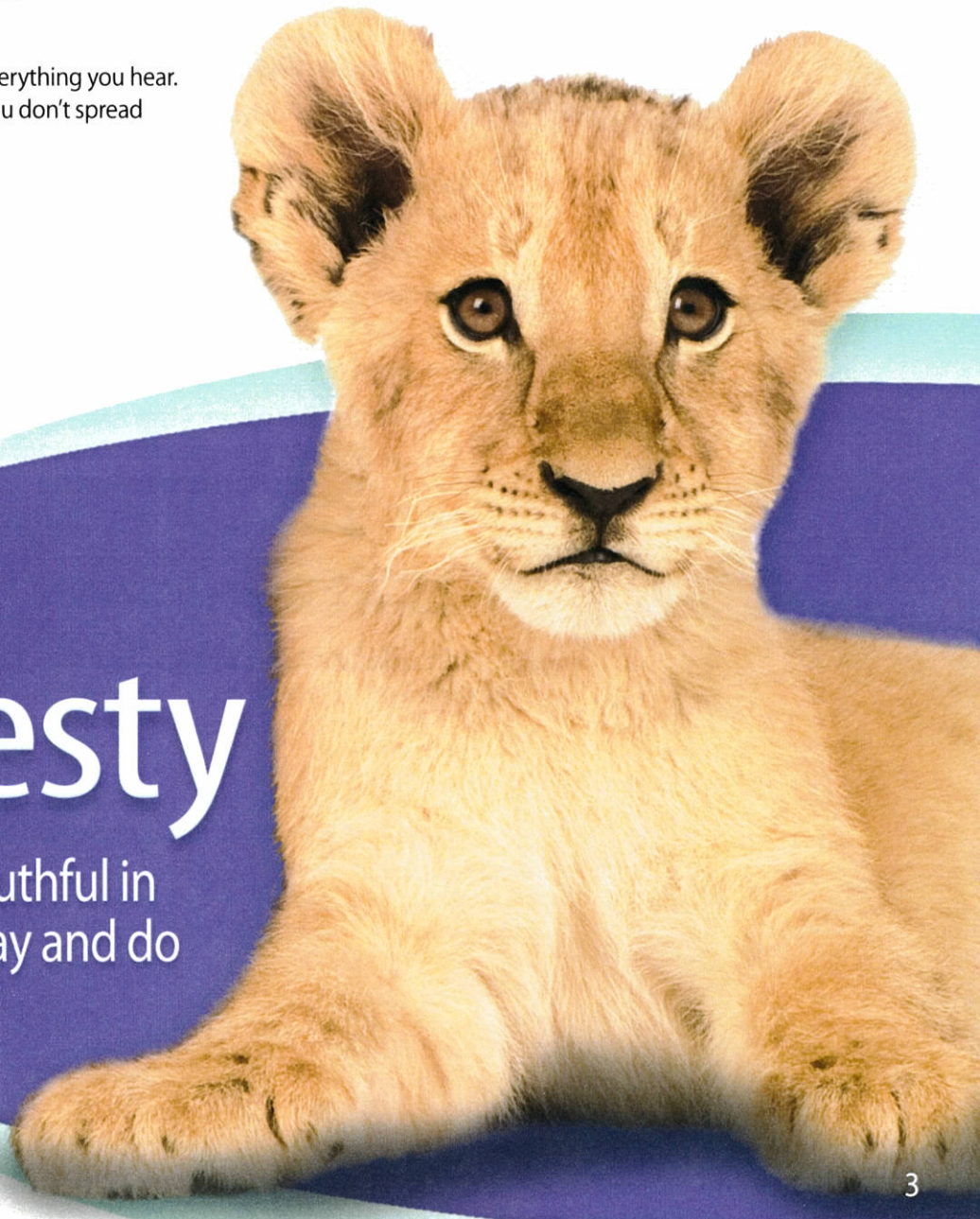
The same principle applies to people. If you tell lies or "stretch" the truth, people won't know if you're being real or if you're fooling them. But if you always tell the truth—even when it's difficult—people can trust what you tell them.

Remember, honesty is the best policy because eventually the truth will be known.

# Honesty

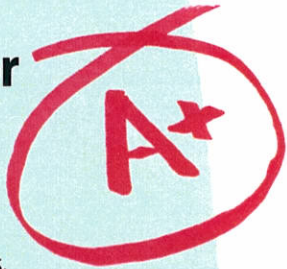


Being truthful in  
what I say and do



# SECTION 2 Practice Honesty

## Praising for Honesty



Cheating is a problem in many schools, and some teachers, parents, and administrators unintentionally make the problem worse by praising academic achievement without emphasizing the inward character needed to do things right.

If you only celebrate the fact that someone passed a test or won a game, you send a message that the outcome is most important—no matter how you achieve it. In other words, the end justifies the means.

But the way students achieve success *does* matter! So when you praise, be sure you reinforce the underlying character traits, study habits, and personal choices that lead to positive outcomes. You might say:

- "Congratulations on passing your test. I really admire how you prepared yourself and did your very best."
- "I know you wanted a higher score, but I appreciate you answering honestly. Cheating would only cause more problems."
- "It looks like your diligence and hard work really paid off. Congratulations on winning the game!"
- "I can tell you put a lot of hard work into that assignment. Your effort shows!"

## I WILL... (Discussion, 25 minutes)

### 1. Tell the truth.

The more you tell the truth, the more others can trust you. But if you tell lies or partial truths, people won't know when you're being real with them or not.

- Why do you think it's important to tell the truth?
- If someone asks you a question that's not their business (Are your parents home? Where do you live?) you don't have to lie. Just keep quiet or say you'd rather not answer the question.

### 2. Play by the rules.

An honest person doesn't cheat in order to pass a test or win a game. Cheating spoils the fun and keeps you from doing your best.

- How do you feel when someone cheats during a game?
- Why is it tempting to cheat on a test? Why is it better to be honest?

### 3. Not exaggerate the facts.

Do not stretch, twist, simplify, or exaggerate what happened in order to make things seem different than what they are.

- If you trick people and say, "It was only a joke," how could that hurt your friendships? How could you hurt your reputation?

### 4. Admit when I am wrong.

Correcting your mistakes builds trust because it shows you have the courage and commitment to admit when you're wrong and make things right.

- Why is it important to correct your mistakes?
- Imagine you hurt a classmate or family member. How should you clear things up? Practice saying, "I'm sorry for hurting you. Will you forgive me?"

### 5. Not take things that don't belong to me.

One way to respect others is by respecting what belongs to them. Don't take what's not yours. Even if you "find" something, check around before claiming it.

- How would you feel if someone stole your money, phone, or pet?
- Why must you pay for something before taking it from a store?
- Is it okay to steal something small like a pencil or candy bar? What if no one will notice? What if you really need it?



## A TANGLED WEB (Story and Project, 30 minutes)

Use this story to illustrate how one lie often leads to more lies, creating a tangled web of deceit. Make it an object lesson by unrolling a ball of yarn and weaving it around the students and classroom as you tell the story.

A young boy wanted to show his father's pocket watch to his friends, so he snuck the watch out of his father's dresser and took it to school. As he showed it to his friends, the boy dropped the watch, and it shattered. He picked up as many pieces as he could and put them back in his father's drawer. When his father discovered the broken pocket watch, the boy was afraid and said he didn't know anything about it.

Years later, this boy became president of a lumber company. On his way home one rainy night, he rounded a curve and came upon a child on a bicycle. He slammed on the brakes, but he could not stop in time. He heard a thud as the boy hit the front of the car.

Terrified, the man backed up, drove carefully around the boy, and sped home. The next morning, the local news reported the hit-and-run accident. Another driver had found the boy and taken him to a hospital. The lumber company president could not stop thinking about the accident and the boy he hit. At noon, he drove to the police station and turned himself in. The jury convicted the man and the judge sentenced him to twenty years in prison.

The man asked the judge, "What would have been the penalty if I had taken the boy to the hospital?" The judge said, "I don't think there would have been a penalty. It was an accident. You would have done what you could." When a reporter asked why he chose to leave an injured boy in the middle of the road, the man recalled the lie he told his father about the pocket watch and explained how his habit of lying led him to think he could make bad things go away by hiding the truth.

### Points to Ponder:

- Lying about what happened leads to more trouble. Ask forgiveness and do what you can to make things right.
- Make a paper Pocket Watch to remember this lesson. Download instructions at [www.CharacterFirstEd.com](http://www.CharacterFirstEd.com).



## GEESE FLY (Game, 20 minutes)

Help students practice their listening and critical-thinking skills with this fun and active game.

This game is similar to "Simon Says." Make a statement such as, "geese fly." Since this statement is true, students should flap their arms like geese. Name a few other things that fly, such as "sparrows fly" and "eagles fly." As long as your statements are true, students should continue flapping their arms.

Then name something that doesn't fly, such as, "books fly." Students should stop flapping their arms when they hear something false.

### Other Examples:

- Trees grow, flowers grow, children grow, hair grows, corn grows, but rocks don't grow!
- Dogs walk, people walk, cows walk, but fish don't walk!
- Cats meow, dogs bark, cows moo, birds chirp, people talk, but lizards don't play the violin!

## TRUTHFULNESS POEM (Literacy Connection, 15 minutes)

Teach this poem as a way to memorize the five "I Wills." Watch the video at [www.CharacterFirstEd.com](http://www.CharacterFirstEd.com).

I will always tell the truth, even when it's hard to do.  
I'll encourage those around me so that they'll be truthful too.

I'll admit when I am wrong. I will not exaggerate.  
And though I may be tempted, I will never steal or cheat!

My character is what will make a leader out of me!  
So next time through, let's say it more  
ENTHUSIASTICALLY!



Additional resources at  
[www.CharacterFirstEd.com](http://www.CharacterFirstEd.com)

# SECTION 3 Honesty in Real Life

## Abraham Lincoln

Before he became a lawyer, Abraham Lincoln worked as a store clerk. He was dependable and honest, and the owner of the store trusted him to run it. The customers in the store knew Abe would not lie about anything he sold.

One day, a lady came into the store. She bought what she needed and left. When Abe closed for the night, he found he had six extra cents. He looked at his sales for the day and realized he gave the lady the wrong amount of change. Those six cents belonged to her!

Abe finished closing up shop and walked three miles to the lady's house. The lady was shocked when she opened the door. "Abe Lincoln, what are you doing all the way out here?" she asked.

"This belongs to you," Abe answered as he gave her the money. "I accidentally gave you the wrong change today, so I came out here to make it right." Word of Abe's truthfulness spread throughout the town, and he earned the nickname, "Honest Abe."

*Learn more about Abe Lincoln's honesty at [www.CharacterFirstEd.com](http://www.CharacterFirstEd.com).*



**Lions use body language to communicate. Their honesty makes it possible to know what they plan to do.**

## THE AFRICAN LION (Story, 20 minutes)

Lions...they always tell the truth. This means you can trust what a lion "says" because lions are honest about what they intend to do. You just have to know the lion's language.

### The Tail

Imagine yourself walking down the sidewalk. You see a lion coming toward you. Don't panic! Look at its tail. A lion's tail always tells the truth.

If the lion's tail hangs down in a long flowing curve and the tip points upward, then it's on a "friendly" stroll through your neighborhood. However, if the lion's tail sticks straight out and the tip twitches back and forth, that lion is not in a friendly mood. It's probably looking for some dinner!

### The Ears

Lions also use their ears to tell you what they're thinking. If the lion's ears are relaxed, then it's in a good mood. But if a lion pins its ears flat against its neck, you better watch out! It's preparing to attack!

### The Mouth

You can also read a lion's lips. When a lion curls just one lip, it is irritated. But if it wrinkles its nose and shows its big, sharp teeth—you better watch out! The lion could attack at any time!

### Truth or Fiction?

Honesty means telling the truth—like a lion—so others can trust what you're saying. But honesty also means knowing when something is NOT true. Practice listening for what's true and what's false in the following two stories. See if you can tell between what is real and what is make-believe.

### Story #1

Years ago, on the plains of Africa, young boys proved their courage and strength by an act of bravery. One day, a boy decided he would prove himself a man. He left his village early in the morning and went searching for a lion. He yelled, "Here kitty, kitty, kitty!" After awhile, he turned around and...a LION!

"Don't panic," he thought, "lions always tell the truth." The boy looked at the lion's tail, ears, and mouth, and all seemed friendly. The boy knew that killing a friendly lion would not be very courageous, so he took a stick and began poking the lion and running all around! The boy whooped and hollered and pulled the lion's tail! The lion became upset—its tail twitched back and forth, its ears flattened against its head, and the boy could see the lion's big, sharp, ugly teeth!

Normally, when lions attack, they jump into the air and land on their victim. The boy knew this and made a tight fist with one hand. As the lion jumped toward the boy, he thrust his fist into the lion's mouth, down its throat, past its stomach, and all the way to the lion's tail. Then, with all his might, the boy grabbed the lion's tail, and pulled the lion inside out! Now the lion's fur was on the inside of the lion, and it tickled and tickled and tickled the lion until it was tickled to death!

The boy grabbed the lion by the tail and dragged it back to his village for all to see that he faced a lion and won.

## Story #2

Years ago, on the plains of Africa, young boys proved their courage and strength by an act of bravery. One day, a boy decided he would prove himself a man. He left his village early in the morning and went searching for a lion. He hit the ground with a big spear so the vibrations would wake up any lions nearby. Soon, the boy turned around and... a LION!

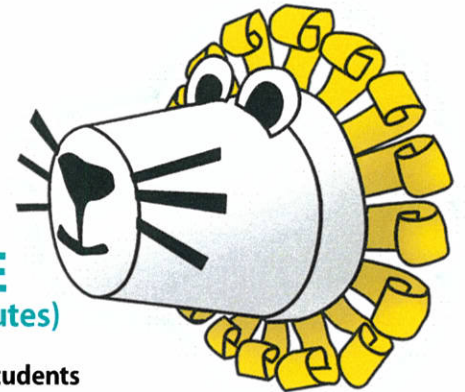
"Don't panic," he thought, "lions always tell the truth." The boy looked and saw the lion's tail sticking straight out, its ears pinned back against its head, and the lion's mouth open wide with his big, sharp, ugly teeth.

Facing a lion is an awesome experience. Dirt flies, the ground shakes, and the lion runs up to 40 miles an hour before

jumping onto its victim. But the boy was ready. He stuck the bottom of his spear in the dirt and pointed the sharp end up in the air. The lion jumped...but it landed on the spear and fell to the ground. The boy stood up victoriously and dragged the lion back to his village to prove that he faced a lion and won.

Do you know which of these stories is true to life? It's the second story—that's the story you can believe.

When you tell stories, be honest about what is true and what is make-believe. Don't trick others, tell lies, or try to deceive. Be honest so that others can believe what you say.



## LION FACE (Project, 25 minutes)

**Make a lion to help students remember to be honest in all they say and do.**

Cut 20 strips of yellow paper. Curl each strip using a pen or pencil, and tape the strips to the inside edge of a foam cup so that the strips curl out. Draw a nose and mouth on the bottom of the cup with a black marker. Draw two eyes on a piece of white paper. Cut out the eyes and tape them to the top of the cup. Cut tiny strips of black paper for whiskers. Tape the whiskers to the side of the cup near the nose.

**Supplies:** foam cup; yellow, black, and white paper; pen or pencil; black marker; scissors and tape



# Family Connection

**OVERVIEW:** Imagine a family, school, or community where people genuinely trust one another. The fact is, everything is easier when people do not manipulate, deceive, or take advantage of others. That's why honesty is so important—it's an essential ingredient for building trust, and that helps people thrive in their work and relationships. Honesty isn't always easy, but the benefits are worth the effort!

## Honesty

**Definition:** Being truthful in what I say and do

### I WILL...

- Tell the truth.
- Play by the rules.
- Not exaggerate the facts.
- Admit when I am wrong.
- Not take things that don't belong to me.

An African Lion tells the truth with its tail, ears, mouth, and posture. It doesn't hide what it thinks.



### CHARACTER QUIZ:

1. Why do you think honesty is important? \_\_\_\_\_
2. An honest person: **a.** admits mistakes. **b.** cheats on tests. **c.** spreads rumors. **d.** lies to someone and says, "I was only joking."
3. An African Lion tells the truth with:  sign language  verbal language  body language
4. An honest person tries to cover up his or her mistakes: TRUE? or FALSE?
5. Why is it more fun when everyone plays by the rules? \_\_\_\_\_

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