

When children use bad language

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What should a parent do when their child uses bad language? Most children will experiment with using bad language. First of all, as a parent, try to determine the cause for the bad language.

The most important step for a parent to take is to stop using bad language. Children listen to parents and repeat, even if they don't do it in front of you. If a parent curses and the child hears it, don't be surprised if they repeat it in the future.

Be an example and if you do curse, apologize and quickly find a different word. If you are not the one using bad language, find out whom your child is picking up this language from and restrict access to those people.

Once a child uses a bad word and gets attention for it, it becomes clear how powerful it can be. Often, children don't understand the context in which they use the word. They know that "naughty words" have shock value and that is enough. Don't laugh and discourage friends and family from laughing when your child says a bad word, as children will interpret laughter as encouragement. Explain and discuss acceptable and unacceptable words and explain that the family does not believe in using bad language. By discussing the rules around language, you help your child to be accountable with their words.

Older children between the ages of six and 10 may know the meaning of curse words and may use them deliberately to be mean, hurtful or to gain control. Kids will try to prove they are independent, and try to assert their control. Since you can't always control what comes out of their mouths, this is an area where they may rebel. With older children, make an effort to find out what is bothering and help them to find other ways of releasing those angry feelings. It may be that a child is using bad language to fit in with the crowd.

Set calm limits and discuss the consequences and follow through next time it happens. Children learn language by listening and repeating, and they repeat not only the good, but the bad. Children need to learn that bad language is not acceptable and being a good example is the best way to start.

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