



YOUNG MASTER CHALLENGE

Honeybee

English

FOCUS VALUE:

Honesty



Article

Keeping It 100:

A Teen's Guide to Honesty

When you say “keeping it 100,” you mean staying real and authentic. It’s a modern way of talking about three classic virtues: honesty, trustworthiness, and integrity.

- Honesty is about telling the truth in what you say and do.
- Trustworthiness means people can count on you to keep your word.
- Integrity is the superpower of doing the right thing, even when no one is watching.

But let's be real—why bother? Lying can seem like an easy fix. It can get you out of trouble, spare someone's feelings, or make you look better. But these are short-term gains. Honesty is the foundation of respect. Without it, friendships collapse, families argue, and communities lose their way. History is filled with tales of grand deceptions, like the Trojan Horse, where a beautiful gift hid a devastating lie. That story has survived for thousands of years because it teaches a core lesson: lies, no matter how cleverly disguised, often lead to ruin.

Telling the truth may be hard in the moment, but it’s the only path that builds a future you can be proud of.

The Mirror Test — Being Honest with Yourself

Before you can be honest with anyone else, you have to get real with the person in the mirror. This is self-honesty, and it’s tougher than it sounds. It means asking hard questions:

- Can you admit you messed up without making excuses?
- Do you recognise your own strengths without bragging and your weaknesses without denial?
- Are you chasing goals because you want them, or because you're trying to please someone else?

Why We Lie to Ourselves. We often lie to ourselves out of fear. Fear of not being good enough, fear of failure, or fear of what others will think. Telling yourself “I’m fine” when you're overwhelmed, or “I’ll start that project tomorrow” for the tenth time, feels like a protective shield.

Counterargument: Can a little self-deception be good? Sometimes, telling yourself "I'm totally ready for this" before a big game or presentation can boost your confidence. This is positive self-talk, and it's healthy! The danger zone is denial. Positive self-talk helps you rise to a challenge; denial prevents you from seeing that a challenge even exists.

A timeless warning against a lack of self-awareness comes from the Greek myth of Narcissus. He was so handsome that he fell in love with his own reflection in a pool of water. Unable to look away or see his true self beyond his surface-level beauty, he eventually wasted away. This myth is an extreme example of how being dishonest with yourself—focusing on a false image instead of your real character—can stop you from truly living.

The Heavy Weight of a Lie

Science shows that lying is physically and mentally stressful. When you lie, your brain goes into overdrive. It has to invent the lie, deliver it convincingly, and then—the hardest part—remember it forever. Psychologists note this can increase your heart rate and release the stress hormone cortisol. Think of it like trying to run multiple video games on an old computer. The system gets overloaded and eventually crashes. That's your brain on lies. This mental exhaustion is the "heavyweight" of dishonesty.

The Reasons Behind a Lie

People lie for many reasons, including to avoid punishment, gain an advantage, protect someone else, or make a story more exciting. Sometimes, there's even a "liar's high"—a thrill from getting away with it. But this feeling is temporary and can lead to a cycle of bigger and more dangerous lies.

A fascinating historical example is Frank Abagnale Jr., the master forger whose life was dramatised in the movie *Catch Me If You Can*. For years, he successfully impersonated a pilot, a doctor, and a lawyer. While it sounds like an adventure, Abagnale later described his life as one of constant, grinding anxiety. He was always looking over his shoulder, terrified of being exposed. His story is a perfect illustration of how even the most "successful" lies come with the unbearable weight of paranoia and isolation.

Real Friends, Real Talk

Friendships are built on a foundation of trust. When that foundation cracks, the whole structure can crumble. In friendships, lies come in many forms:

- Lies of Commission: An outright, deliberate falsehood. ("I never said that about you.")
- Lies of Omission: Leaving out a key part of the truth. (Not telling your friend you're also trying out for the same spot on the team.)
- "White Lies": Small untruths told to avoid hurting someone's feelings.

Isn't it better to tell a white lie than to be cruel?

This is a classic dilemma. If your friend asks, "Do you like my new haircut?" and you think it's awful, what do you do? The key is tactful honesty. Brutal honesty ("That's the worst haircut I've ever seen") is about making yourself feel superior. Kind, constructive honesty ("I think your old style framed your face better, but what matters is that you like it!") is about helping your friend. The goal is to build trust, not to tear someone down.

History's most famous tale of broken friendship is the betrayal of Roman dictator Julius Caesar by his close friend Brutus. Seeing his friend among his assassins, Caesar's alleged last words were, "Et tu, Brute?" ("You too, Brutus?"). The phrase captures the ultimate pain of being betrayed by someone you trust completely.

Navigating Honesty at Home

Being honest with family can feel like walking on a tightrope. You're afraid of being grounded, disappointing your parents, or starting a massive argument. The main reasons teens lie at home are to avoid punishment and to gain more freedom.

However, this strategy almost always backfires. Think of trust like a bank account. Every time you're honest, even when it's tough, you make a deposit into your trust account with your family. Every time you lie and get caught, you make a massive withdrawal. Parents are more likely to grant freedom and privileges to someone with a high trust balance. Admitting you broke curfew might get you a lecture, but it shows integrity. Hiding it and getting caught later shatters their ability to trust your word.

Beyond the Grade: Academic Integrity

School is a training ground for your future, and academic integrity is one of the most important subjects you'll ever study. Cheating on a test, copying homework, or plagiarising an essay might seem like a harmless shortcut, but you're only cheating yourself. You don't learn the material, and you develop a habit of taking the easy way out.

Plagiarism—using someone else's words or ideas without giving credit—is intellectual theft. It's like stealing a musician's song and calling it your own. A shocking historical example of academic fraud is the Piltdown Man. In 1912, an amateur archaeologist claimed to have found the fossilised remains of an early human in a gravel pit in Piltdown, England. The scientific community was ecstatic; it was hailed as the "missing link" between apes and humans. For over 40 years, it was cited in textbooks. But in 1953, scientists proved it was a deliberate and mischievous hoax—a human skull combined with an orangutan's jaw, all stained to look ancient. The lie derailed human evolution research for a generation and remains a powerful cautionary tale about the importance of truth in the pursuit of knowledge.

Your Ripple Effect: Honesty Online & IRL

Your actions don't exist in a vacuum. Every choice you make, honest or not, creates a ripple that affects others.

- **Online Honesty:** The internet is full of misinformation. Before you share that shocking post or viral video, ask: Is this true? Am I sure? Spreading false information, even unintentionally, contributes to a culture of doubt and division. Your online identity, or "digital footprint," is a permanent record of your integrity.
- **In Your Community:** Being the teammate who admits they missed the shot, the employee who owns up to a mistake, or the friend who keeps a promise makes you a pillar of your community.

Many world religions and philosophies speak to this. Buddhism's concept of "Right Speech" is one of the tenets of the Eightfold Path, advising followers to avoid lying, divisive speech, and idle gossip. The Golden Rule, found in Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and others, is a simple guide: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Would you want to be lied to? If the answer is no, then you have your guide.

Honesty in Young Master Challenge Resources

- In *The Wednesday Wars* (Gary D. Schmidt), Holling Hoodhood learns that being honest about his feelings — even when it means standing up to adults — helps him grow into a stronger, braver person.
- In *Akeelah and the Bee*, Akeelah must be honest with herself about her talent, her fears, and her need for support. By admitting the truth, she finds courage and wins respect.

These stories remind us that honesty isn't always easy, but it always helps you become your best self.

Conclusion: Choose Your Truth

Honesty is more than a rule — it's a choice. You choose whether to tell the truth, to live with integrity, to be trustworthy. Lies might protect you for a moment, but honesty protects your future.

So the next time you face a tough decision, ask yourself: Am I keeping it 100? Because choosing honesty builds character, strengthens relationships, and makes life simpler and brighter.