

**The Guiding Childhood Behavior Series
has pamphlets on the following topics:**

- **biting**
- **crying**
- **discipline**
- **lying**
- **going to the store**
- **stealing**
- **teaching independence**
- **teaching manners**
- **temper tantrums**
- **toilet training**

**Contact the Kent County Health Department
if you would like to know more about these or
other childhood behavior topics.**

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Copies of this brochure are available on the Kent County
Health Department web site at
www.co.kent.mi.us/health/publications.htm

STEALING

Guiding Childhood Behavior Series



This pamphlet tells you:

- **why children steal.**
- **how to prevent stealing.**
- **what to do if your child steals.**

Why Children Steal

By the age of 8, a child knows when something belongs to someone else. If your child takes something, it may be because he wants to:



- show off.
- get attention.
- see if he can get away with it.
- do anything he wants to do.
- get back at someone.
- feel a sense of control.

Remember, his stealing may be his way of trying to "tell" you that he has a need. However, a younger child may not know the difference between stealing and borrowing something.

What To Do If Your Child Steals

- Ask your child why he or she took the item.
- Stay calm and tell your child that taking things that belong to someone else is wrong. If you do not talk about it, he or she will think it is ok to take another child's things.
- Tell your child why the item has to be returned. For example, "It is someone else's toy."
- Go with your child to take the item back.
- Talk to your child about the consequences of taking someone else's things again. For example, "If you take one of Tom's toys, you will not be able to go to his house to play for one day."

How To Prevent Stealing

Here are some things, as a parent, you can do to prevent stealing:

- Be a good example.
- Give your child a special place like a drawer, box, or shelf to keep his or her toys and things in. Your child should also have at least one toy that does not have to be shared with anyone. This teaches children that some things belong to them. Then, it will be easier for your child to understand that some things belong to others.
- Tell your child that we can not always have everything that we want. Give your child an example of something that you want, but that you can not have. Explain how to save money to buy things we want.

