

Why do children tattle?

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When young children see a peer cause harm, they often tattle to a caregiver. But why do children tattle? A new *Social Development* study reveals that even when children cannot be blamed for a transgression, they tattle about it nonetheless, likely because tattling may be a way for children to enforce norms on others and thus help maintain cooperation.

The research sheds new light on why young [children](#) tattle and raises the question of whether tattling should necessarily be discouraged in early childhood.

"Children's tattling is often viewed as an undesirable behavior. But at least under some circumstances, tattling can also be seen as evidence that children recognize important social norms and that they care enough about those norms to try and make sure that others follow them as well. This kind of norm enforcement is generally seen as a positive force in [social groups](#)," said co-author Dr. Amrisha Vaish, of the University of Virginia.

More information: *Social Development*, [DOI: 10.1111/sode.12290](https://doi.org/10.1111/sode.12290)

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