

# He's Teasing Me!



*Parents can't stop all teasing, and not all teasing is hurtful. Playful teasing can make the one being teased, as well as those hearing it, smile or laugh and feel included. It can create bonds. Hurtful teasing can cause anger and resentment and can isolate a young child. By understanding teasing, you can know when to let it go and when to step in and say, "Enough!"*

## Why do young children tease each other?

- Teasing is often shown as funny on television shows or in movies. Children may imitate what other children or television characters do because they think that it's "cool."
- Teasing can be a way to get attention or to respond to being teased, to feel superior, to be friends with others by excluding the victim, or to hide discomfort with differences.

## How can parents respond?

- Listen to your child's description of the teasing. Accept his feelings about it. Some teasing can make school or play situations painful.
- Try not to overreact. Seeing your child being teased may bring back unhappy memories of being teased in your childhood. Try to put those memories aside and remember that the teaser is also a child.
- Show your child that you believe she can handle it. Be aware that a child hurt by teasing may lose self-esteem. Encourage her to be with others who help her feel good about herself.

## What hints may help a child who is being teased?

- Tell him to say to himself, "I don't like this, but I can handle it. Just because he's saying these things about me doesn't make them true."
- Suggest she walk away or ignore the teaser. Sometimes teasing loses its appeal when the victim doesn't react. Tell her: "Pretend the teaser is invisible or speaking an unknown language." "Picture an invisible shield that the hurtful words can't get through."
- Suggest he laugh or respond in an unexpected way: "I do wear glasses. Cool, huh?" Or tell him to respond with an indifferent "So?"
- Tell her to ask for help if the teasing becomes prolonged, constant, threatening, or violent. Adults—including parents, teachers, administrators, and counselors—must step in if teasing becomes bullying or torment.

## For related Web resources, see "He's Teasing Me!" at <http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tips.htm>.

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