

# NO LIES ON YOU Toddlers know when they are being lied to from as young as TWO

Boffins say kids can recognise lying, cheating and pretending after tests found they understood 'false beliefs'

BY HOLLY CHRISTODOULOU | 30th November 2016, 1:01 am



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**TODDLERS know when their parents are lying to them, according to boffins.**

A new study has found that kids as young as two-and-a-half are aware of 'false beliefs' – meaning they could also tell if someone is lying or cheating.



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Children from as young as two know when they are being lied to

Researchers analysed the behaviour of more than 140 children in the United States aged two-and-a-half using a method known as the 'false belief task.'

This is used to determine if children fail to understand when others think differently than they do.

In the test, a character named Emma hides an apple in a container, which is then moved to an undisclosed location.



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Scientists found that toddlers understood 'false beliefs'

Before asking where Emma will look for her apple, the team asked two extra questions where the kids were shown two object pictures and asked about the location of the object in question.

The researchers say this method helped to reduce the information-processing demand, making it easier for them to answer the ultimate question.

As the children were able to answer correctly, the findings indicate that they are aware that others may hold different beliefs from them – far younger than previous studies have suggested.

Assistant Professor Setoh Pei Pei, of Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, said: "Having the ability to represent false beliefs means recognising that others can have different thoughts from us.

"This ability enables children to recognise when others are lying, cheating, or pretending.



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Scientists previously thought children could only recognise lying from four upwards

"If parents believe that children do not understand complicated matters, they may tell simpler versions of the truth and 'dumb down' what they view as complicated content for kids.

"Our findings suggest that children may be able to spot when parents are doing this from as early as two-and-a-half years old.

"Parents of young children and early childhood educators should be aware that children's early cognitive abilities may be more advanced than previously thought."