

Qualifying Children to Take the Oath: Materials for Interviewing Professionals

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These materials are based on research conducted with maltreated children at the Edelman Children ' s Court in Los Angeles County, and with non-referred children attending Bing Nursery School at Stanford University. The research was supported by Grant No. 90-CA-1553 from the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect. We thank the current and former Presiding Judges of the Los Angeles County Juvenile Court, the County Department of Children ' s and Family Services, Dependency Court Legal Services, County Counsel, several hundred private attorneys, and the Child Advocate ' s Office for their support of the research. Joyce Dorado, Tina Goodman-Brown, Debra Kaplan, and Robin Higashi assisted in the research. David Lyon illustrated the tasks. Correspondence regarding these materials may be sent to the first author: University of Southern California Law School, University Park, Los Angeles, California 90089-0071. Email: tlyon@law.usc.edu © 1998 Thomas D. Lyon & Karen J. Saywitz.

Introduction

The purpose of these materials is to assist you in determining whether a child witness understands the difference between the truth and lies and appreciates the importance of telling the truth. Our research has suggested that common techniques used to qualify young children often misevaluate children's true capacities (Lyon & Saywitz, in press). The following materials were designed to both minimize the difficulties children face in defining and discussing the truth and lies, and to ensure that children will not falsely appear competent due to guessing or following the lead of the questioner.

There are two tasks. The first task (truth vs. lie) evaluates whether the child understands that the words "truth" and "lie" refer to statements that correspond to reality and statements that fail to correspond to reality, respectively. The second task (morality) determines whether a child understands the consequences of telling a lie, for example, that telling a lie will result in "trouble."

We recommend that a child be given four truth vs. lie problems (set A, B, or C) and four morality problems. If a child answers four of four problems correctly, this demonstrates good understanding of the concept (there is only a 6% likelihood that a child would answer four of four problems correctly by chance).

We recommend that you emphasize the words that appear in all capital letters in the script when reading the script to the child.

Once a child gives an answer to an item question, say "OK" in a friendly way that does not indicate whether they answered correctly.

Always start with the boy/girl on the left of the picture.

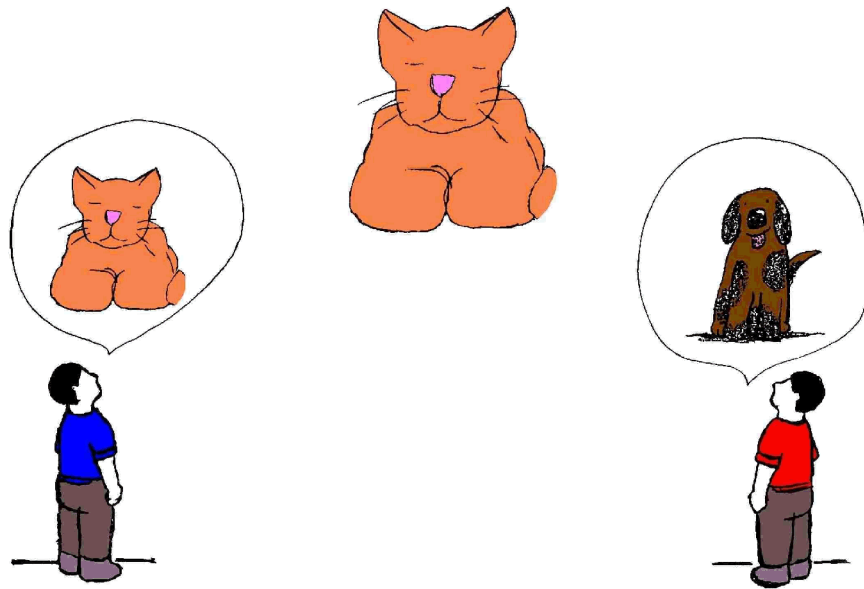
If the child shows good understanding on the first two items of each task, some of the language may be omitted for the last two items:

- (a) For the truth/lie task, "One will tell a lie and one will tell the truth," may be omitted.
- (b) For the morality task, "Well, one of these girls/boys is going to get in trouble for what she/he says," may be omitted.

References

Lyon, T.D., & Saywitz, K. J. (1999). Young maltreated children's competence to take the oath. *Applied Developmental Science*, 3, 16-27.

TRUTH VS. LIE TASK (A1)



Here's a picture. Look at this animal--what kind of animal is this?

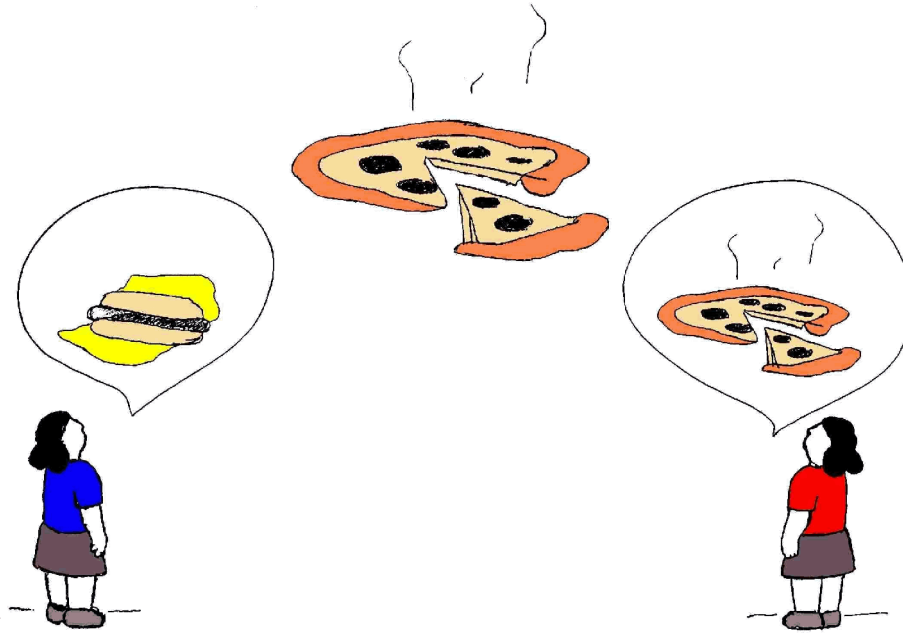
OK, that's a [child's label].

LISTEN to what these boys say about the [child's label]. One of them will tell a LIE and one will tell the TRUTH, and YOU'LL tell ME which boy tells the TRUTH.

(point to boy on the left) THIS boy looks at the [child's label] and says "IT'S a [child's label]."
(point to boy on the right) THIS boy looks at the [child's label] and says "IT'S a PUPPY."

Which boy told the TRUTH? *(correct answer is boy on the left.)*

TRUTH V. LIE (A2)



Here's another picture. Look at this food--what kind of food is this?

OK, that's a [child's label].

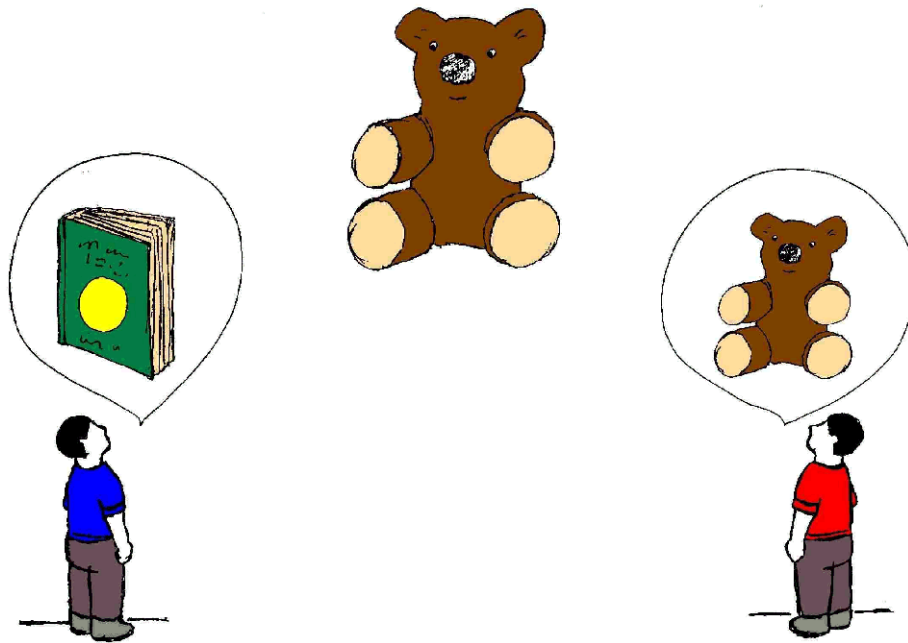
LISTEN to what these girls say about the [child's label]. One of them will tell a LIE, and one will tell the TRUTH.

(point to girl on the left) THIS girl looks at the [child's label] and says "IT'S a HOT DOG."

(point to girl on the right) THIS girl looks at the [child's label] and says "IT'S a [child's label]."

Which girl told a LIE? *(correct answer is girl on the left)*

TRUTH V. LIE (A3)



Here's another picture. Look at this toy--what kind of toy is this?

OK, that's a [child's label].

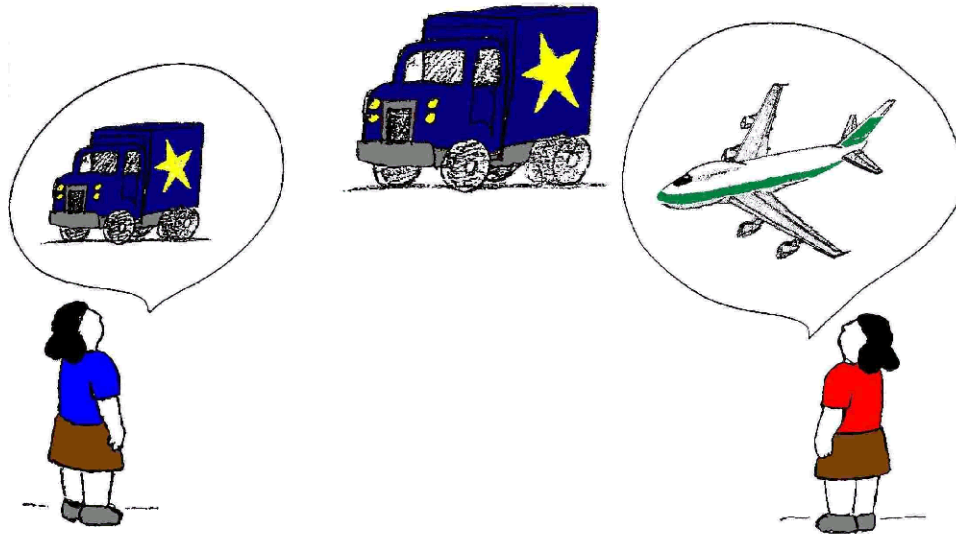
LISTEN to what these boys say about the [child's label]. One of them will tell a LIE, and one will tell the TRUTH.

(point to boy on the left) THIS boy looks at the [child's label] and says "IT'S a BOOK."

(point to boy on the right) THIS boy looks at the [child's label] and says "IT'S a [child's label]."

Which boy told the TRUTH? *(correct answer is boy on the right)*

TRUTH V. LIE (A4)



Here's another picture. Look at this toy--what kind of toy is this?

OK, that's a [child's label].

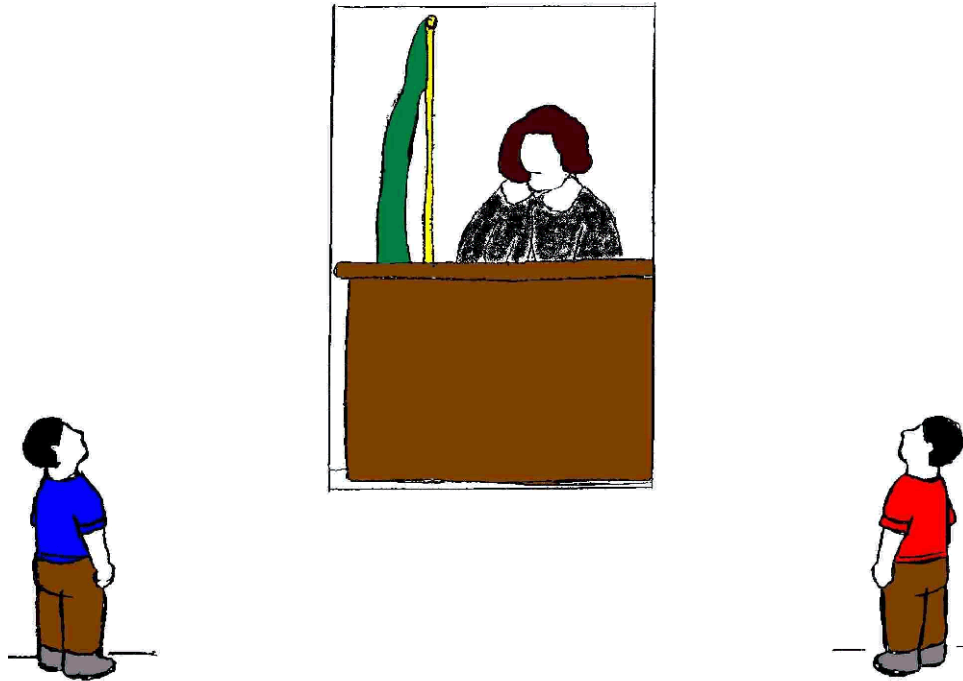
LISTEN to what these girls say about the [child's label]. One of them will tell a LIE and one will tell the TRUTH.

(point to girl on the left) THIS girl looks at the [child's label] and says "IT'S a [child's label]."

(point to girl on the right) THIS girl looks at the [child's label] and says "IT'S a PLANE."

Which girl told a LIE? *(correct answer is girl on the right)*

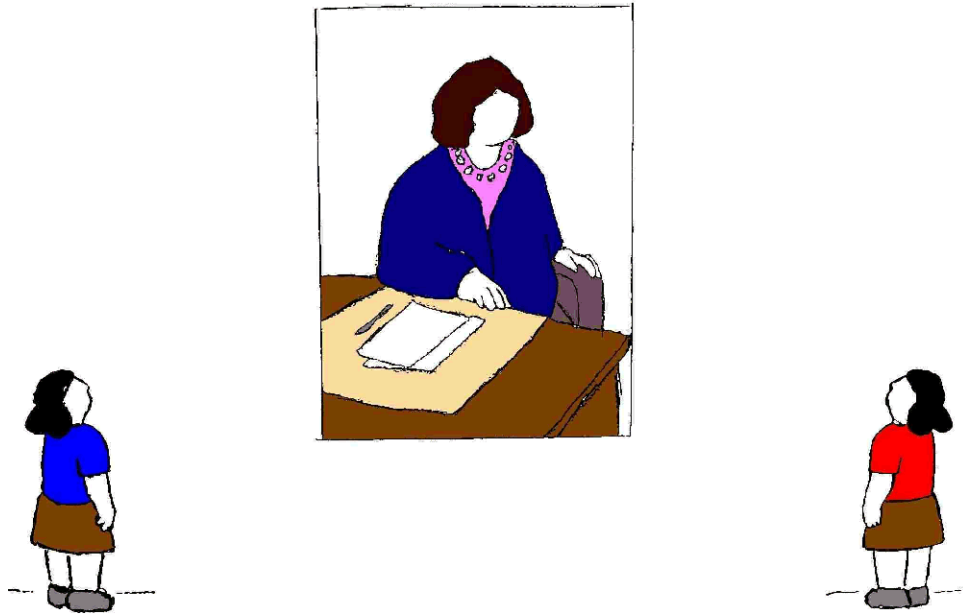
MORALITY TASK (1)



Here's a Judge. She wants to know what happened to these boys.
Well, ONE of these boys is GONNA GET IN TROUBLE for what he says, and YOU'LL tell ME which boy is GONNA GET IN TROUBLE.
LOOK [child's name],
(point to left boy) This boy tells the TRUTH.
(point to right boy) This boy tells a LIE.

Which boy is GONNA GET IN TROUBLE? (*correct answer is boy on the right*)

MORALITY TASK (2)



Here's a Lady who comes to visit these girls at home. She wants to know what happened to these girls.

Well, ONE of these girls is GONNA GET IN TROUBLE for what she says.

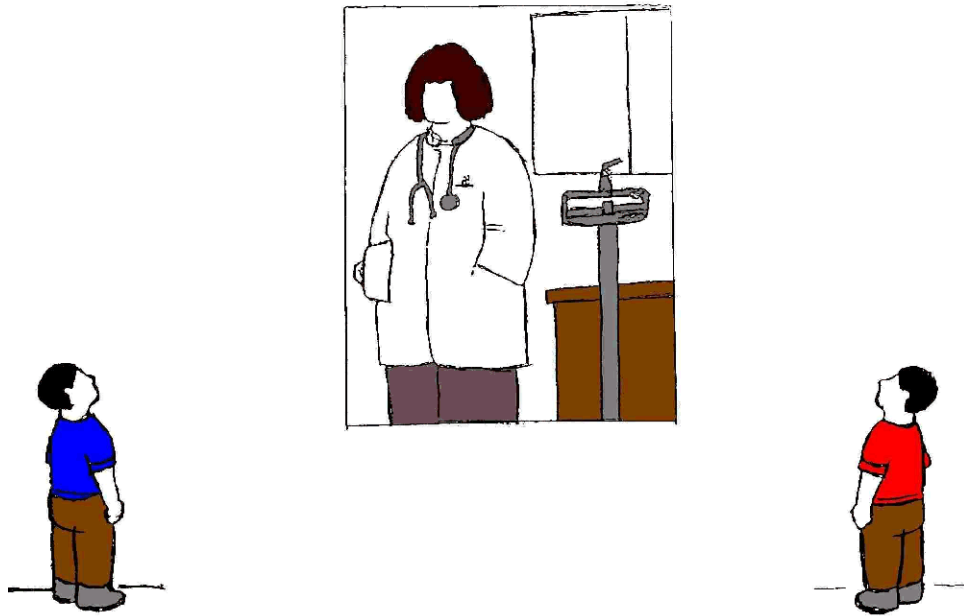
LOOK [child's name],

(point to left girl) This girl tells a LIE.

(point to right girl) This girl tells the TRUTH.

Which girl is GONNA GET IN TROUBLE? *(correct answer is girl on the left)*

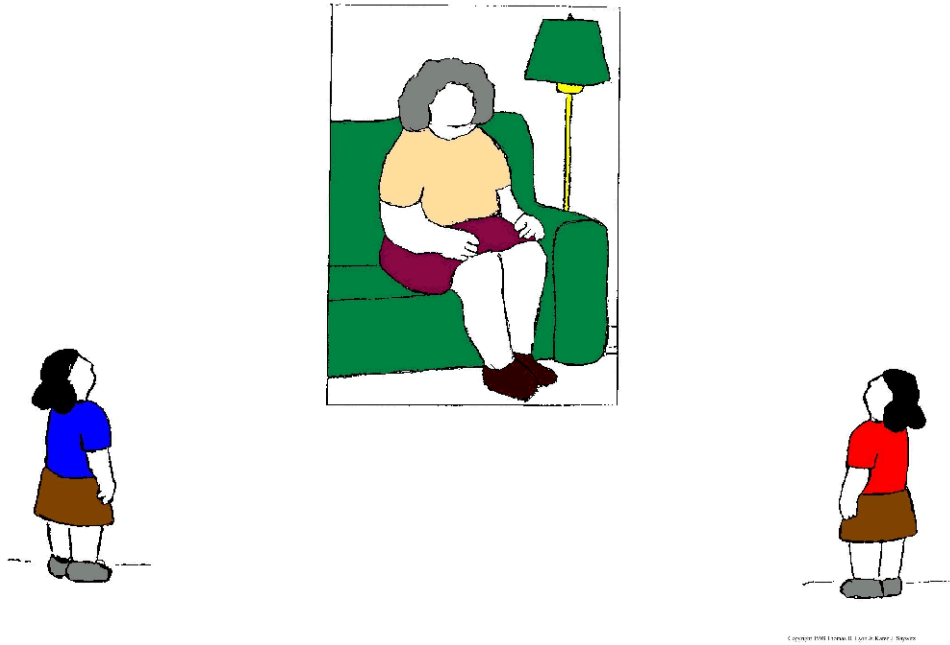
MORALITY TASK (3)



Here's a Doctor. She wants to know what happened to these boys.
Well, ONE of these boys is GONNA GET IN TROUBLE for what he says.
LOOK [child's name],
(point to left boy) This boy tells a LIE.
(point to right boy) This boy tells the TRUTH.

Which boy is GONNA GET IN TROUBLE? (*correct answer is boy on the left*)

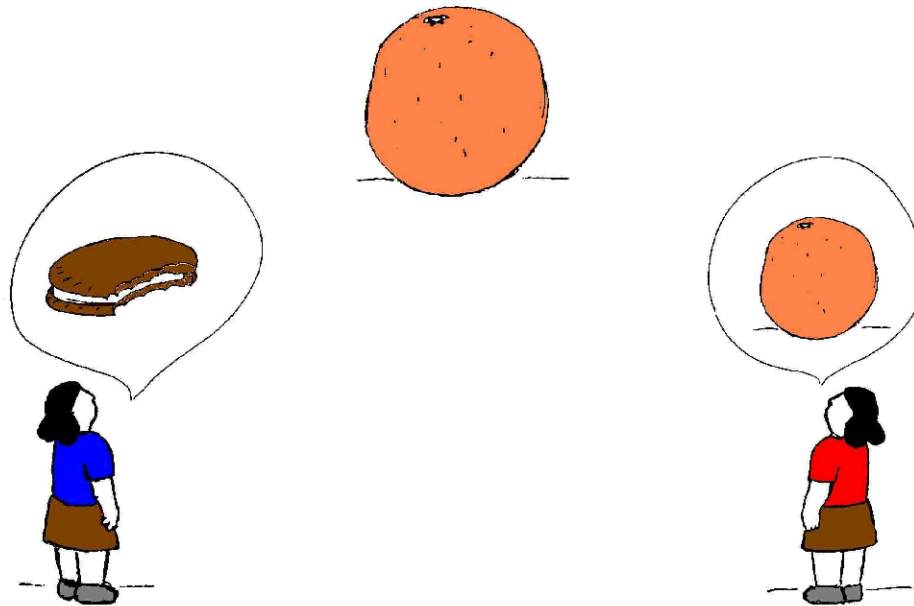
MORALITY TASK (4)



Here's a Grandma. She wants to know what happened to these girls.
Well, ONE of these girls is GONNA GET IN TROUBLE for what she says.
LOOK, [child's name],
(point to left girl) This girl tells the TRUTH.
(point to right girl) This girl tells a LIE.

Which girl is GONNA GET IN TROUBLE? (correct answer is girl on the right)

TRUTH VS. LIE TASK (B1)



Here's another picture. Look at this food--what kind of food is this?

OK, that's a [child's label].

LISTEN to what these girls say about the [child's label]. One of them will tell a LIE and one will tell the TRUTH, and YOU'LL tell ME which boy tells the TRUTH.

(point to girl on the left) THIS girl looks at the [child's label] and says "IT'S a COOKIE."

(point to girl on the right) THIS girl looks at the [child's label] and says "IT'S a [child's label]."

Which girl told the TRUTH? *(correct answer is girl on the right)*

TRUTH VS. LIE TASK (B2)



Here's another picture. Look at this toy--what kind of toy is this?

OK, that's a [child's label].

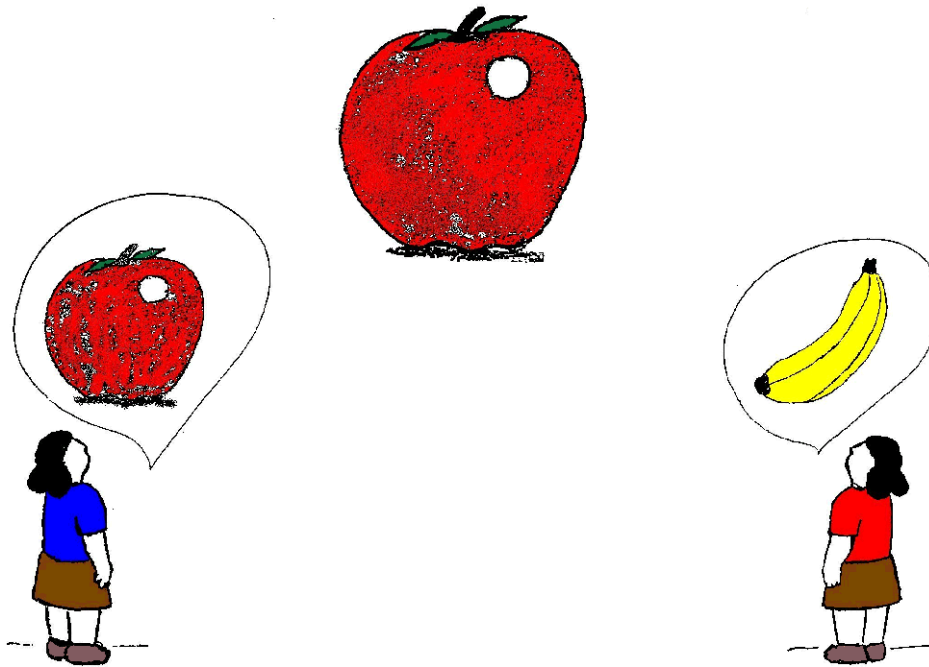
LISTEN to what these boys say about the [child's label]. One of them will tell a LIE, and one will tell the TRUTH.

(point to boy on the left) THIS boy looks at the [child's label] and says "IT'S a [child's label]."

(point to boy on the right) THIS boy looks at the [child's label] and says "IT'S a FOOTBALL."

Which boy told a LIE? *(correct answer is boy on the left)*

TRUTH VS. LIE TASK (B3)



Here's another picture. Look at this food--what kind of food is this?

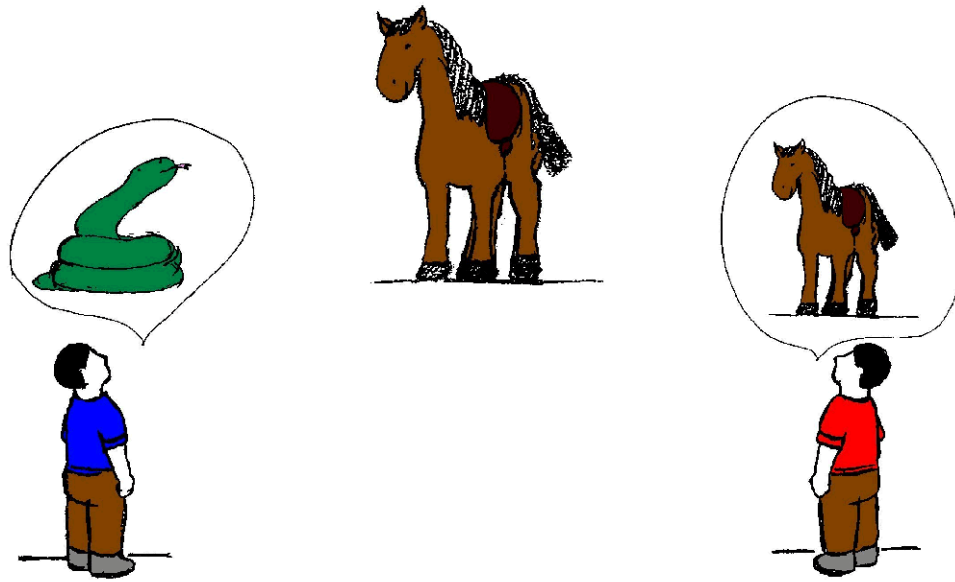
OK, that's a [child's label].

LISTEN to what these girls say about the [child's label]. One of them will tell a LIE, and one will tell the TRUTH.

(point to girl on the left) THIS girl looks at the [child's label] and says "IT'S a [child's label]."
(point to girl on the right) THIS girl looks at the [child's label] and says "IT'S a BANANA."

Which girl told the TRUTH? *(correct answer is girl on the left)*

TRUTH VS. LIE TASK (B4)



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Here's another picture. Look at this animal--what kind of animal is this?

OK, that's a [child's label].

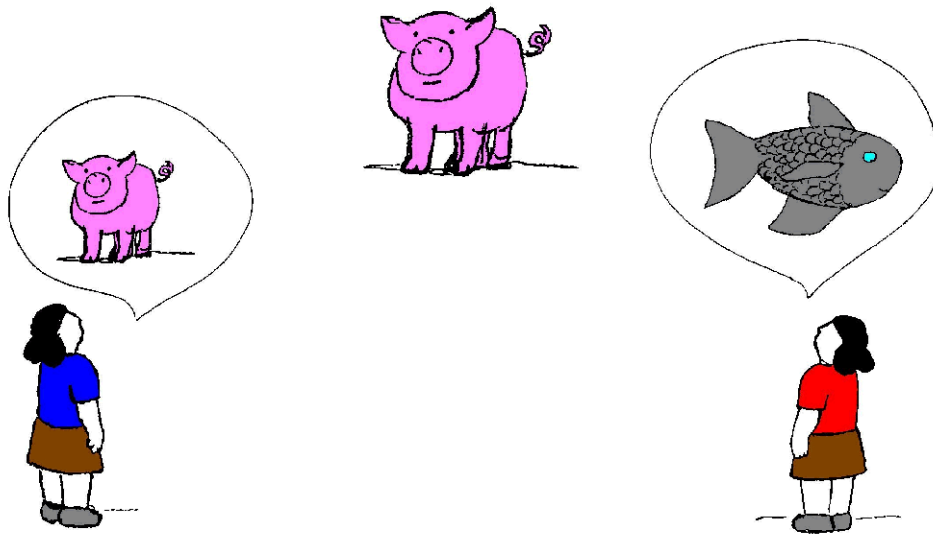
LISTEN to what these boys say about the [child's label]. One of them will tell a LIE and one will tell the TRUTH.

(point to left boy) THIS boy looks at the [child's label] and says "IT'S a SNAKE."

(point to right boy) THIS girl looks at the [child's label] and says "IT'S a [child's label]."

Which boy told a LIE? *(correct answer is boy on the left)*

TRUTH VS. LIE TASK (C1)



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Here's a picture. Look at this animal--what kind of animal is this?

OK, that's a [child's label].

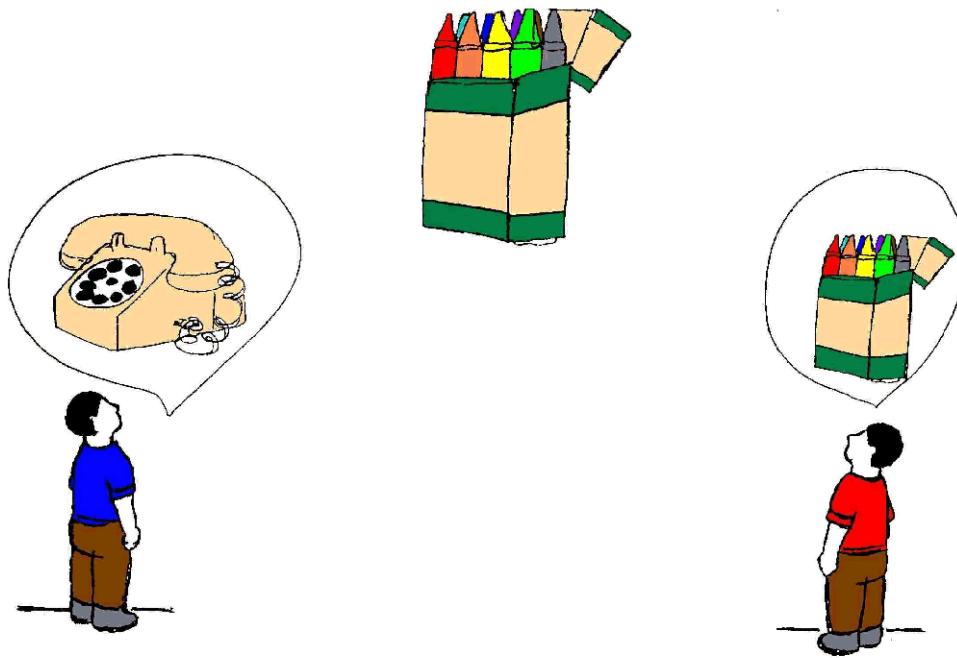
LISTEN to what these girls say about the [child's label]. One of them will tell a LIE and one will tell the TRUTH, and YOU'LL tell ME which boy tells the TRUTH.

(point to girl on the left) THIS girl looks at the [child's label] and says "IT'S a [child's label]."

(point to girl on the right) THIS girl looks at the [child's label] and says "IT'S a FISH."

Which girl told the TRUTH? *(correct answer is girl on the left)*

TRUTH VS. LIE TASK (C2)



Here's another picture. Look at this toy--what kind of toy is this?

OK, that's a [child's label].

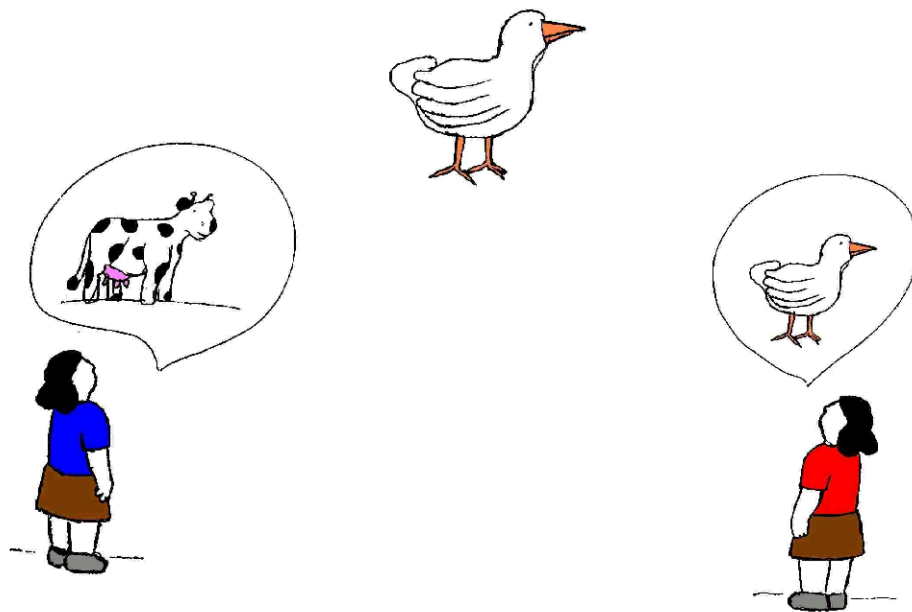
LISTEN to what these boys say about the [child's label]. One of them will tell a LIE, and one will tell the TRUTH.

(point to left boy) THIS boy looks at the [child's label] and says "IT'S a PHONE."

(point to right boy) THIS boy looks at the [child's label] and says "IT'S a [child's label]."

Which boy told a LIE? *(correct answer is boy on the left)*

TRUTH VS. LIE TASK (C3)



Here's another picture. Look at this animal--what kind of animal is this?

OK, that's a [child's label].

LISTEN to what these girls say about the [child's label]. One of them will tell a LIE, and one will tell the TRUTH.

(point to girl on the left) THIS girl looks at the [child's label] and says "IT'S a COW."

(point to girl on the right) THIS girl looks at the [child's label] and says "IT'S a [child's label]."

Which girl told the TRUTH? *(correct answer is girl on the right)*

TRUTH VS. LIE TASK (C4)



Here's another picture. Look at this food--what kind of food is this?

OK, that's a [child's label].

LISTEN to what these boys say about the [child's label]. One of them will tell a LIE and one will tell the TRUTH.

(point to boy on the left) THIS boy looks at the [child's label] and says "IT'S a [child's label]."

(point to boy on the right) THIS boy looks at the [child's label] and says "IT'S a CARROT."

Which boy told a LIE? *(correct answer is boy on the right)*