

7 TO 9 YEARS

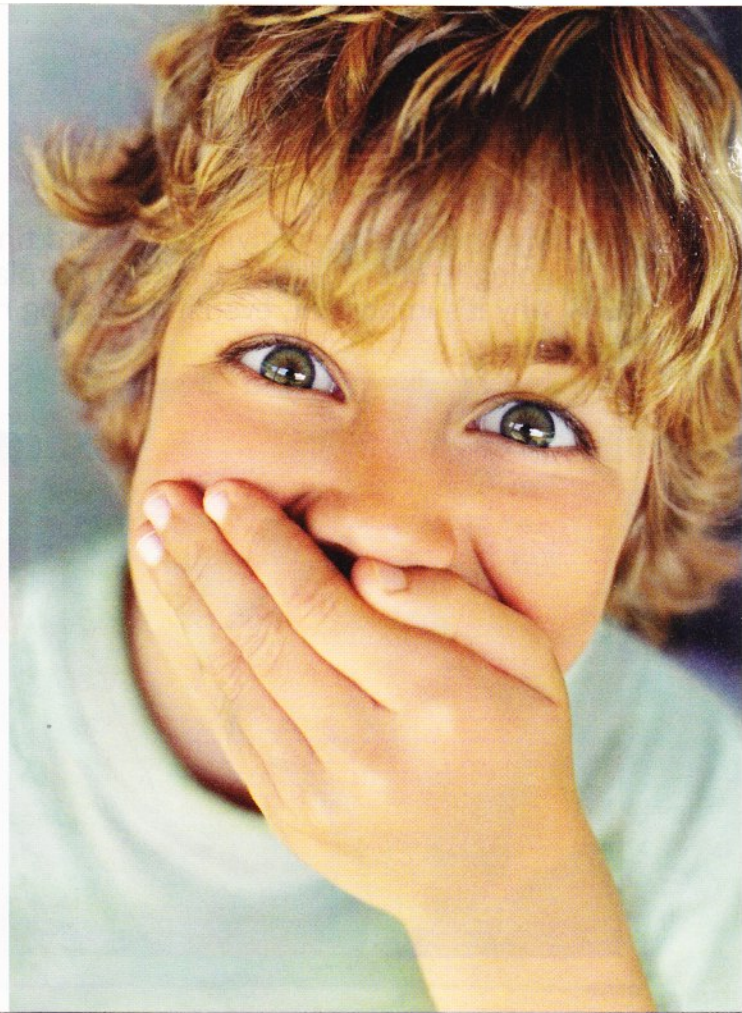
Cures for Cussing Your son comes bounding off the school bus and drops the F-bomb. What's up with that? Kids this age—and especially boys—often curse to fit in or boast, says psychologist Timothy Jay, Ph.D., author of *What to Do When Your Kids Talk Dirty*. It gives them social currency. Your response:

Ask what he means. You never know what qualifies as swearing. Stephani Zerbst of Bellingham, WA, recalls her kid telling her that someone used the "c" word. She could only think of one bad "c" word, but that wasn't it. He meant "crap."

Keep your cool. Getting angry only reinforces the power of profanity. Instead, look for the motivation behind the behavior, Jay recommends. Is he trying to be cool? Funny? Suggest alternatives to help him out, like "Oh, snap."

Talk about the words. Kids don't understand why swear words are so loaded. Explain simply: "That's a not-nice word for sex," if your child is ready for that, or "That word offends people. Think about how you're making others feel."

Get creative for chronic swearing. Try a swearing jar. Have him—better yet, all family members—deposit a quarter, marble, or rock for every infraction. After, say, five deposits, he'll lose video-game or TV time. Odds are he'll likely decide swearing isn't worth it (at least around you). —Joanna Nesbit



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