

SAY

Use say when you report someone's words: She said to lock the door when you leave. If you are reporting speech, you must set it off in quotation marks. She said, "Close the door when you leave."

Use say when you ask about language: How do you say "book" in Spanish? You say hello, say goodbye, say thank you.

TELL

Tell is usually followed by a person: Tell John to lock the door. Tell him to bring the key. He told me his name. Can you tell me where the post office is?

You tell someone a story, a joke, your name, your address, your phone number.

You don't tell someone directions, you give them directions. Can you give me directions to the post office?

NOT Can you tell me directions to the post office?

ASK

Ask is used for questions. My sister asked me to babysit. I asked him to turn the TV off. We asked her what time it was.

SPEAK or TALK

Do you speak Korean? NOT Do you talk Korean? I spoke to Jim about it. OR I talked to Jim about it. Both of these are correct.

Decide if these sentences are correct. If not, how would you correct them.

1. My daughter always tells the truth.
2. The police officer said me to come here.
3. She told him her name.
4. Please say me a story, Mommie.
5. My dad tells funny jokes.
6. What should I tell my mom?
7. Tony told that he was hungry.
8. The doctor told I have to exercise more.

Students: Read the conversation. Explain the underlined phrases. Answer the questions at the bottom.

Teacher: Mr. Jones, I asked you here today because your son has been talking back in class. This morning I asked him to return the book he borrowed from me and he said, "I'm not finished with it yet. I'll bring it back later." As you can tell, he does not treat me with respect. I tried to talk it over with him after class, but he wouldn't speak to me. He said he had to get to gym class and he couldn't be late. This problem is getting out of hand. I'm sure you'll agree your son should be punished at home for being disrespectful.

Mr. Jones: My son shouldn't be disrespectful. I'll talk to him about that. But my son complains that you talk down to him. He says you treat him like he is stupid. He feels you are insulting him by treating him like he doesn't have good sense. I can't speak for my wife, but I'm very upset that my son is being treated this way. He's an intelligent boy.

Teacher: Mr. Jones, I would never mistreat a student. My record speaks for itself. I was selected teacher of the year last year.

Mr. Jones: That's a high honor and that speaks well for you. But I need to speak my piece. Until you change your attitude about my son, I think this problem is going to continue.

Teacher: Well, Mr. Jones, I told my principal that I would meet with you today and the problem would be solved. But obviously, I spoke too soon. I was really counting on you supporting me in this. But I see that you are going to support your son. I had hoped I could talk you into punishing your son, but I see that will not happen. You will defend him at all costs.

Mr. Jones: If his own dad won't speak up for him, who will? My father always told me to speak up when I saw injustice.

Teacher: I hardly think this is a case of injustice, Mr. Jones. I have done nothing to hurt your son. I speak from experience when I say that if you refuse to make your son act respectfully when he is young, he will grow up with no respect for authority.

Mr. Jones: You may think you've done nothing to speak of, but my son comes home in tears every day. So I'm quite sure something is going on. I'll be speaking to the principal about this.

1. What does the teacher say the problem is?
2. What does Mr. Jones think the problem is?
3. Do you agree with the teacher that his comments were disrespectful?
4. What record is the teacher talking about when she says, "my record speaks for itself"?
5. If someone has been chosen teacher of the year, does that mean they are a great teacher?
6. What does the teacher mean when she says, "I spoke too soon."?
7. Is the teacher angry that Mr. Jones is defending his son at all costs.
8. Why does Mr. Jones think something is going on with the teacher?
9. What would you do if one of your children was being disrespectful to the teacher.
10. If the teacher told one story and your child told a different one, what would you do?

Abby: Your twin sons are so cute. But honestly, I can't tell them apart.

Sara: They look alike but they are very different in personality. Tom, the older one, learned to tell time when he was only 2 years old. And he loves to read history, though he is only six years old. The librarian told him he was too young to check out that big history book. But Tom told her off. He said, "I've read bigger books than this when I was much younger." But the younger twin is not interested in reading at all. He lives to play soccer, and he's quite good at it.

Abby: I can't speak highly enough of the job you have done raising the twins. They are both smart and considerate.

1. Is Abby complimentary of the twins?
2. Is Abby complimentary of Sara?
3. Is Sara proud of both of her twins? Do you think she favors one over the other?
4. Did you ever believe your parents favored one of your siblings more than the others?

Discuss the meaning of these other "talking verbs". Answer the question.

1. What do you do if you confess?
2. Demonstrate mumbling.
3. Did you tattle on your siblings when you were young?
4. Did you whine for candy when you were young.
5. If someone accused you of lying, how would you respond?
6. Give an example of a demand.
7. If you inquire about something, what do you do?
8. What do you do if you interrupt someone?
9. If your spouse snaps at you, what do they do?
10. Do your kids grumble about doing their homework?