

Name _____ Grade _____ Date _____
Reading comprehension
9th grade

Read the text below and answer Questions

**LIE DETECTION –
How to spot a liar**

Native English speakers all have their own style of speech, influenced by factors such as where they live and their socioeconomic status. Yet Pamela Myer reveals in her book *Liespotting* that when people tell lies, their verbal and non-verbal behaviours are nearly universal.

Liars reveal themselves through various verbal tactics. They will use statement structure to avoid answering questions or to deflect suspicion. A parrot statement, repeating a question verbatim, is used to stall for time in order to think up a suitable response. If someone genuinely wants to clarify a question, she might choose to repeat a key word or two but rarely the entire question. Beware, also, the dodgeball statement – the suspect ignores the question just asked and, instead, tosses one straight back at you. Then there is what Myer calls the guilt-trip statement, a device that puts the enquirer on the defensive. The liar feigns offence and hopes that you will forget the question while you defend yourself against his accusation of unfairness or prejudice. Another tactic for deception is the protest statement. This is when the suspect avoids a direct response to a question by listing his favourable assets and deeds so that you will think he is incapable of wrongdoing. The too little or too much statement is just that. The culprit will attempt to skirt the question by offering too little information or by being effusive – offering a wordy explanation but managing to avoid answering the question.

A bolstering statement contains a phrase that adds emphasis in an attempt to sound more credible and sincere: “*To be honest*, I have no idea how the item got damaged.” Listen also for the qualifying phrase that people use to protect themselves from reproach or responsibility: “*As far as I recall*, …”. If a religious phrase is used to bolster a statement, for instance: “*Honest to God*, I didn’t touch her purse”, the speaker is most likely a hypocrite, because an honest person does not need to appeal to God or religion for support.

Distancing statements are highly characteristic of deceptive speech. A deceiver will avoid using first person pronouns (I, me, myself) in order to literally keep himself completely out of the statement. He will also avoid using first names and, where possible, use language that depersonalises another person, for example: “I don’t know what *that woman* said.” Euphemism, substituting a mild or vague term for a harsher one, is another means of distancing the speaker from the action. “I did not *pocket* the money” instead of “I didn’t *steal* the money”.

Verbal leaks are said to occur when the mental burden of sustaining a lie becomes too much. The liar may ‘um’ and ‘ah’ too much or make grammar mistakes and other

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errors. A slip of the tongue is an unintentional mistake, often trivial, but occasionally revealing an unconscious thought or wish (the so-called Freudian slip). Consider: “I’d

like to spank all teachers” – George W. Bush. A non-contracted denial is another verbal leak. It is usually uttered slowly with emphasis on ‘not’, as in: “I did *not* leave the door open.” A fibber who cannot express himself in a straightforward manner because he needs time to think may pause frequently and speech disfluencies – meaningless words, sighs and throat clearing – will populate his dialogue. “It was – *sigh* – late, when I, *uh*, got home, *like*, around midnight.” However, you would need to have a normal conversational baseline for the speaker in order to make an objective comparison as some people use fillers such as ‘like’ and ‘you know’ constantly. Vocal quality is another indicator of deception. Listen for higher pitch, a slower rate of speech and strain or tension in the voice. These are very subjective criteria, however, so take into account other facial, body language and verbal indicators. Vocal quality alone is the least reliable indicator unless you are very familiar with the speaker’s standard mode of speech. In an effort to stay in control of the lie, the liar may control his body, becoming rigid and upright while his voice may assume a matching lifeless monotone. Sometimes actions do not correspond to words – an emphatic ‘no’ accompanied by a slight nod of the head is a sure giveaway.

The manner of articulation and delivery combined with facial expressions, body language and verbal clues will suggest an overall attitude; and attitude is a crucial indicator of both truthfulness and deceit. Weigh up all the factors including whether the subject has been cooperative or unhelpful.

Another weapon in the arsenal of lie detection is story analysis. Most stories have a beginning, a middle and an end, but real memories are not usually related in chronological order. Our emotions cause us to recall the most dramatic event first and in a lot of sensory detail, whereas the liar will ‘remember’ his story in chronological sequence. A false story often has a prolonged and detailed prologue setting the scene (with many truthful features such as time and place). Then the main event (the lie) is passed over quite quickly whereas, for the truthful person, this is the most important part of the action and it is recounted at length. The truth teller will also deliver an epilogue, at times becoming very emotional, as she describes the impact and after effects of the main event. Rarely does the false narrative conclude with an epilogue as the narrator was unaffected by the main event because it did not happen or, if it did, not in the way he related it.

Lie detection is more than just picking up on the occasional verbal clue; rather, it is recognising a cluster of clues and appraising them in the light of the subject’s nonverbal behaviour. By watching and listening carefully and for long enough, you will discern deception if it is there.

Questions 1-5

Complete each sentence with the correct ending, **A–I**, below.

There extra endings.

- 1 A person uses a parrot statement
- 2 A person uses a dodgeball statement
- 3 A person uses a guilt-trip statement
- 4 A person uses a protest statement
- 5 A person uses a bolstering statement

- A to appear more truthful and convincing
- B to repeat a few words of the question
- C to ask a question instead of giving an answer
- D to clarify a question
- E to criticise the questioner
- F to delay answering

G to deny his guilt
H to give a reason in his defence
I to show off his good qualities

Do the following statements agree with the information given in the text on the previous pages?

TRUE if the statement agrees with the information

FALSE if the statement contradicts the information

NOT GIVEN if there is no information on this

6 Liars would rather give too little than too much information.

7 Liars use qualifying statements if they need to take responsibility for their mistakes.

8 Truthful people are less likely to bolster their statements with religious phrases.

9 A slip of the tongue is an accidental error that could expose a hidden belief.

Choose the correct letter, **A**, **B**, **C** or **D**.

10 The statement: “I was not in the office after hours” contains which of the following verbal clues?

A a filler	C a non-contradicted denial
B impersonal language	D a euphemism

11 Which of the following is the least dependable as a marker of deception?

A vocal quality	C attitude
B verbal leaks	D body language

12 An untruthful story is more likely to have

A a jumbled sequence of life events	C a short main event section
B expressions of emotion	D an illogical grammatical structure

13 A truthful story is more likely to have

A strict chronological order	C few details around the main event
B a lengthy introduction	D a heartfelt conclusion