

# Accepts Responsibility for Choices and Actions

## What does “Accepts Responsibility for Choices and Actions” mean?

This skill is about a child showing ownership over what they say and do. When children learn to take responsibility for their choices and actions, they are able understand that no one else is to blame for what they say or do. They admit their mistakes and accept the results of their actions. This skill is important because it shows that children are learning that they are in charge of how they act.

## TIPS for TEACHERS

### How can I explain this skill to children?

Let children know that we all make mistakes. The most important thing to do when you make a mistake is to tell the truth and try to make it right. For example, pretend you are playing with your friend’s favorite toy, and you break it. Your friend starts to cry, and the teacher comes over to see what happened. You may be afraid to tell the truth about what happened because you might get in trouble. You may be afraid that your friend will be mad at you. You may want to tell your friend and the teacher that it wasn’t your fault that the toy broke and find someone else to blame. But none of these things will make the situation better. The best thing you can do is admit your mistake, and say you’re sorry. Admitting your mistakes and apologizing for them can be hard, but it’s an important part of growing up!

### What are some examples of best practices from educational experts and fellow teachers?

#### TIP1

**Connect the dots between actions and consequences.** To help children understand that their actions have consequences, they need to understand the idea of cause and effect. It can sometimes be hard for young children to understand how one thing affects another. To help them learn the idea of cause and effect, talk them through actions and consequences that you see. For example, if the class is struggling to line up quietly at the door for lunch, you can say, “We are not lining up quietly at the door in time for lunch. Because of that, we will be late and have less time to eat our food.” Or, if they worked hard on a class art project, you can say, “Because you all worked really hard on this art project, we now have something beautiful to hang in our classroom!” You can also encourage them to think through cause-and-effect situations by saying things like, “What do you think might happen BECAUSE it was raining this morning?” Or, “Michael shared his snack with a friend. What do you think might happen because he did that?” This helps children begin to start tying cause and effect to their actions so they can better think through and understand the consequences of what they say and do.

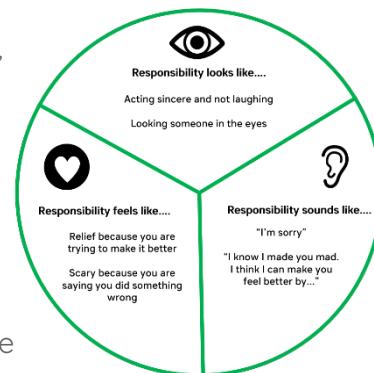
## TIP2

**Model self-control.** It is important for children to learn that they are in control of themselves, even when others make them angry or upset. The best way to show children that they have control over their actions is to model self-control when they have done something wrong or have upset you. For example, if a child throws something across the room, instead of getting angry and yelling at them, you can model self-control by approaching them calmly and talking to them about what they did and why it wasn't the best choice. It is especially important that the child doesn't feel scared or ashamed about admitting their mistakes or accepting the consequences for what they've done. By approaching them calmly and neutrally, you can help them feel safe in accepting the consequences of their actions.

## TIP3

**Responsibility chart.** Show children what it means to be responsible for the things they say and do. Create a "Y chart" that shows children exactly what responsibility looks, feels, and sounds like. Brainstorm examples of what responsibility looks, feels, and sounds like with your class.

Write down their answers on the chart and hang it somewhere in the classroom where they can see it. When a student is not showing responsible behavior, remind them to look at the chart and think about how they can be responsible for what they say and do. To the right is an example of a responsibility chart:



## TIP4

**What does it take to fix a mistake?** Four steps! When children make a mistake, it is helpful for them to have a process for owning up to the mistake and trying to fix it. Talk to your class about the four steps they can take to admit a mistake and make it better. Create and display a chart like the one below to help them remember the four steps. It can also be helpful to walk children through these steps one at a time when they are struggling to accept responsibility for something they have done.

The Four Steps It Takes to Fix Your Mistakes			
Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Figure out what I did and why	Figure out how it affected others	Figure out how to make sure it doesn't happen again	Figure out how to make it better
What did I do wrong? Was I angry or upset? Was it an accident?	How did my mistake make others feel? How would I have felt if that happened to me?	What are some better choices I could have made? What do I do differently next time?	What can I do to make the situation better? Is there someone I need to apologize to?

### How can I encourage children when I see them trying to learn this skill?

**Acknowledge children for their efforts!** For example, say, "I think it's great that you cleaned up the mess you made, Tia!" or "Darrius, you must be proud of yourself for taking responsibility for what you did and apologizing."

To learn more about the tips and where they came from, please visit our references page: [ckphilly.org/citations](http://ckphilly.org/citations)