

## 20+ Words for Truth, Falsehood, and Error

How many words do you know for twisting the truth? There are many more than the English words for truth itself! Learn the differences in feeling, formality, or exact meaning between the various synonyms for honesty, lying, and inaccurate information. At the bottom of the page there are some activities to practice different forms of these words and to rank them. See how many you can figure out!

Lying (or “telling a lie”) is when a person says something he or she knows is false for the purpose of deceiving someone else (convincing them to believe something that isn’t true.) Someone who tells lies is a liar. Most people have lied at some time, but lying can become a habit-- a way to try to impress others or to escape blame.

A “white lie” is a false statement to protect someone’s feelings: “That dress looks great on you. It doesn’t make you look fat at all.” “Thanks for the great present! I always wanted...” (when you didn’t really want it.) It’s usually possible to find a way to protect feelings without lying, but sometimes it’s a lot harder.

Someone can also say something false without knowing it’s false. (They are misinformed.) This is not lying but an error or mistake. They are wrong, but not trying to deceive someone. Incorrect logic or arguments can lead to false conclusions and cause a lot of problems, even when the people who make them have good intentions. So can inaccuracy-- carelessness with details. (If a store adds your expenses inaccurately, their mistake can cost you as much as if they deliberately overcharged you or stole your money.)

People can also be deceitful without actually lying. They can misrepresent the facts or **imply** (without actually saying) that something is true when it’s not. This is called misleading (or fooling, tricking, or deceiving) people.

When the purpose of deception is to make money from someone, it’s fraud. Misleading claims and even fraudulent advertising are especially common when there are no simple, sure answers and people need answers. (Examples include cancer remedies or weight loss programs.)

When you need a product or service like that, a friend might quote an old Latin saying: “*Caveat emptor,*” which means “buyer, beware!” Watch out for people who might “stretch” the facts or misrepresent what they are selling to make it sound better than it really is.

The safest policy is to verify the facts for yourself: investigate what they say to find out if it is true or not. Some claims are unverifiable. That means there is no way to be sure if they are true or not. In that case, think about your past experience with this person. Is he or she trustworthy? (Can you trust him completely?) Does his argument seem reasonable, or “too good to be true.”

If you have never seen anything like it before, or as good as he says, it is likely (probable) that he is exaggerating. To exaggerate is to make something sound bigger and better than it really is.

There is an old Russian proverb that U.S. President Reagan liked to quote, which says in English “trust, but verify.” It’s wise advice

## Practice These Words for Truth, Falsehood, & Error

Put these words in order from the most honest/truthful to the most serious lie (There is no one right answer. Several of these words are about the same. Just think about what each means. However, the first and last are definite.):

- A. say something incorrect in error,
- B. lie,
- C. tell the truth but leave out important facts,
- D. deceive someone,
- E. tell the whole truth,
- F. perjure oneself (lie under oath)
- G. misrepresent a product,

*"No man has a good enough memory to make a successful liar."*

~Abraham Lincoln



Fill in the blanks in these tables with other forms of the words (see the examples in each table.)

### Honesty

Nouns	Verbs	Adjectives	Adverbs
1. ex: honesty	--- (to be honest)	honest	honestly
2.	--- (to tell the truth or be truthful)	2: true & truthful	2:
3. accuracy			
4. correction	to correct or to be correct		
5.	to validate		---
6. 2 <sup>nd</sup> ex: verification	to verify (find out the truth)	verifiable, unverifiable	---

### Errors

Nouns	Verbs	Adjectives	Adverbs
7. ex: error	to err or to be in error	erroneous	erroneously
8.	(to be mistaken or make a mistake)		
9. ---	(to be wrong)		
10. misinformation			---
11.	---	inaccurate	
12. ---	---	incorrect	

### Lies and Deceit

<b>Nouns</b>	<b>Verbs</b>	<b>Adjectives</b>	<b>Adverbs</b>
13. ex: deception	to deceive	deceptive	deceptively
14. exaggeration			---
15. dishonesty	--		
16. falsehood	to falsify (data)		
17.a lie, lying	to lie		---
18.	to defraud	fraudulent	
19.	to misrepresent		---
20. ---		2: misleading, mised	---

## Answers:

Put these words in order from the most honest/truthful to the most serious lie:

E, A, C, G, D, B, F

- E. tell the whole truth,
- A. say something incorrect in error,
- C. tell the truth but leave out important facts (you could also put this one second),
- G. misrepresent a product, \
- D. deceive someone,                      these could be re-ordered
- B. lie,    /
- F. perjure oneself (lie under oath)

Fill in the blanks in these tables with other forms of the words (see the examples in each table.)

### Honesty

Nouns	Verbs	Adjectives	Adverbs
1. ex: honesty	--- (to be honest)	honest	honestly
2. truth	--- (to tell the truth or be truthful)	2: true & truthful	2: truly, truthfully
3. accuracy	to be accurate	accurate	accurately
4. correction	to correct or to be correct	correct	correctly
5. validation	to validate	valid	---
6. 2 <sup>nd</sup> ex: verification	to verify (find out the truth)	verifiable, unverifiable	---

### Errors

Nouns	Verbs	Adjectives	Adverbs
7. ex: error	to err or to be in error	erroneous	erroneously
8. mistake	(to be mistaken or make a mistake)	mistaken	mistakenly
9. ---	(to be wrong)	wrong	wrongly
10. misinformation	to misinform	misinformed	---
11. inaccuracy	---	inaccurate	inaccurately
12. ---	---	incorrect	incorrectly

### Lies and Deceit

<b>Nouns</b>	<b>Verbs</b>	<b>Adjectives</b>	<b>Adverbs</b>
13. ex: deception	to deceive	deceptive	deceptively
14. exaggeration	to exaggerate	exaggerated	---
15. dishonesty	--	dishonest	dishonestly
16. falsehood	to falsify (data)	false	falsely
17. a lie, lying	to lie	lying	---
18. fraud	to defraud	fraudulent	fraudulently
19. misrepresentation	to misrepresent	misrepresented	---
20. ---	to mislead	2: misleading, misled	---

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