

# Know! About the TikTok Bathroom Challenge

The latest TikTok trend sweeping the nation and wreaking havoc in schools is called the "Bathroom Challenge." It's where middle and high school students record themselves stealing and vandalizing school property, then post their videos on social media. It's called the Bathroom Challenge because of what many students refer to as "devious licks" takes place in school bathrooms. As part of this challenge, soap dispensers and sinks are being ripped from the walls, mirrors and floor tiles are being smashed, and toilets are being overfilled with rolls of paper towels or pulled out of place completely.

After having experienced instances of this "challenge" in his school building, Central Ohio Middle School Principal Scott Gaddis reached out to his network of parents and guardians urging them to have a strong conversation with their children to discourage them from participating in this destructive trend. "We have already made a school-wide announcement informing them (students) that anyone caught stealing or damaging school property will receive appropriate discipline," Gaddis said.

Appropriate discipling might include a theft or institutional vandalism charge on their record, as well as school suspension.

"The bottom line is that these actions amount to theft and destruction of property," said Gaddis. "In addition to school discipline, students also will likely face criminal charges. Families will be held responsible for the cost of repairs or replacement of any property that is damaged or stolen."

Many schools have been forced to close bathrooms for a portion of the day or altogether. In addition to the obvious, limiting access to restrooms is not ideal at a time when handwashing is more critical than ever.

TikTok responded quickly to demands made to remove all content related to this challenge; however, youth are savvy and have found ways around it. These videos can still be found on TikTok and other social media.

The key to discouraging such behavior is to talk with your child about this and other social media "challenges." As you do, here are some points to keep in mind:

- Don't assume your child won't try it: Remember, a teen's brain is not fully developed. Impulsivity, peer pressure and competitive desire to one-up a peer are all-powerful influencers.
- Set clear boundaries: Share your expectations and what you consider to be acceptable and unacceptable behavior. What your child thinks is okay, may not be okay with you.
- State (and restate) the obvious: Stealing and destroying school property is wrong. Explain that fellow students may do it to fit in, or because they think it's funny, but it's no joke, and the punishments can be harsh.
- Prompt critical thinking: Ask your child, "What do you think would happen if you do this?" Help your child learn to step back for a moment and apply basic logic and reason before making a decision that could impact his/her/their future, as well as your trust.
- Keep it positive: Though you may be tempted to focus solely on the negative consequences, remember that youth are hardwired to defend against negative messages or scare tactics. It's important to educate them on the risks; however, you must also emphasize what they should do, like resisting peer pressure, making good decisions for themselves, and never encouraging others to put themselves at risk.
- In reading this tip, you are already taking a step in the right direction. But you must also be aware that as this internet challenge fades out, another is sure to follow, which is why it's so important to talk with our teens about the risks of this and other online challenges.

### **Tips for Adult Allies**

Share the consequences of the bathroom challenge with youth.

In addition to consequences set forth by parents/guardians, you're looking at the potential of:

- School suspension.
- Loss of sports/band/other school-related extracurriculars.
- Theft or institutional vandalism charges on your record.
- Your family being responsible for repairs or replacement of property.

### **Sources**

**CNN, Megan Marples: The 'devious licks' TikTok challenge has students stealing toilets and vandalizing bathrooms. Sept. 18, 2021.**

**McAfee, Toni Birdsong: Digital Dares - Dumb Kids with Smart Phones. Sept. 23, 2014.**