

10 TO 12 YEARS

**Boastful Boys** From bragging about a new skateboard trick to a high score in a computer game, one-upmanship takes center stage now, as boys try to be, well, men, notes Michael Thompson, Ph.D, author of *It's a Boy*. What you need to know to keep that tough-guy competitive instinct under control:

**KEEP IT IN PERSPECTIVE**

Outward arrogance is not an indicator of a whole new personality—your guy will still be sweet most of the time, Thompson explains. He's trying out a two-dimensional notion of masculinity based on media-driven sports and action-movie heroes.

**TRY TO IGNORE IT**

Boys respect each other's opinions at this age, and if a boy is too arrogant, other boys will put him in his place soon enough. Peer opinion now carries more weight than a parent's, says Thompson, so you'll see more results if you leave it up to his friends to correct his behavior.

**QUESTION IT**

Often boys don't realize their behavior is coming across as rude or mean-spirited, so ask questions—in private—to clarify how he appears to others. Try

saying "Do you think the other boys liked it when you said such-and-such?" But don't do it in front of his friends—you'll make the group uncomfortable and lower your credibility.

**DISARM IT WITH HUMOR**

Keeping it light prevents him from tuning you out. Give your boy a skeptical look or make a humorous comment—"Oh, yes, Your Majesty, we're all servants here"—and skip the rant. "Most tween boys don't or won't listen to more than two or three sentences of a parental lecture," Thompson explains.

**STEP IN IF IT GETS MEAN**

"If your child crosses the line of irony or light sarcasm to something hurtful, you need to address it as soon as possible," says Thompson. If you don't, you're sending a signal that it's okay. —Joanna Nesbit

