

# A Children's Guide to Tourette Syndrome



## What is Tourette Syndrome?

Tourette Syndrome, or TS for short, happens when your brain makes your body move or say something that you might not want to. When this happens it is called a **tic**.

You know when you get a bug bite, you can't help but scratch it even if you don't want to? That is what a tic is like. Someone with TS can tic at any time and won't be able to help it, even if they don't want to do it. Sometimes people can stop the tic from happening but it can be very hard to do; just like it's really hard to not scratch that bug bite.

## What are the different types of tics?

**Motor:** when your body does something you can't control (examples: eye blinking, head shaking, shoulder shrugging)

**Vocal:** when you make a sound you don't want to make (examples: sniffing, coughing, throat clearing)

Sometimes only one part of your body tics and sometimes more than one part might tic. For example, you might not be able to stop blinking your eyes and clearing your throat at the same time.

## What else should I know about tics and TS?

- Sometimes we see on TV that people with TS swear or say inappropriate things, but this only happens with 1 out of every 10 people who have TS.
- Tics often happen more if you are nervous, upset, excited, or tired.
- You might not have any tics while you are doing something that you are focused on, such as playing a sport or instrument, swimming, dancing, drawing, or doing something you really enjoy.
- You might not always be able to tell when a tic is going to happen, but sometimes you might start to feel an urge before it begins.
- Sometimes tics will go away as you get older, and sometimes you will still have them as a grown-up. You may get some new ones while others go away. Your tics can also change, and as time goes on, you might start to have different kinds of tics than you usually have.

1  
in  
50

**At least 1 in 50 children have Tourette Syndrome or tics.**

## What does it mean if I have Tourette Syndrome (TS)?

TS and tics are very common, meaning that a lot more kids and adults have it than you would ever know. Scientists tell us that at least 1 in every 50 kids have TS or tics—that is a lot of kids! Usually kids start to have tics between the ages of 5 and 7 years old. As you get older and become a teenager, the tics could change. Sometimes your tics might go away when you get older, but for those who don't there are a lot of ways that doctors can help.



## How do I know if I have TS?

If you have one or more tics, you can go to a doctor's office and the doctor will ask you questions about what types of movements and sounds you make and how often the tics happen. The doctor will ask you these questions to help decide if you have TS. You should also know that you can have a tic, but it might not always be TS. Either way, if your tics hurt or bother you a lot, the doctors will come up with ways to help you feel better.

Some kids with TS will also have other conditions, such as problems with writing, depression, anxiety, learning challenges, a hard time with changes, and even rage. Some kids have the need to do something a certain way or until it feels just right, which may be obsessive compulsive

disorder, or OCD for short. It's important to be honest with your parents about what you're feeling. They can help talk about these other issues with the doctor who is helping you.

## How did I get Tourette Syndrome (TS)?

You did nothing wrong to get TS and it is not contagious. Just like you can't catch your friend's eye color, you can't catch Tourette from someone else. Doctors don't know how people get TS, but we know that family genes play a role. This means it is similar to having the same hair color or being the same height as one of your other family members. Having TS is like if one of your friends or classmates has asthma. Your friend with asthma might not know how they got it, but they can see a doctor to help make them feel better when the asthma is bothering them.

## Will TS and tics affect me at school?

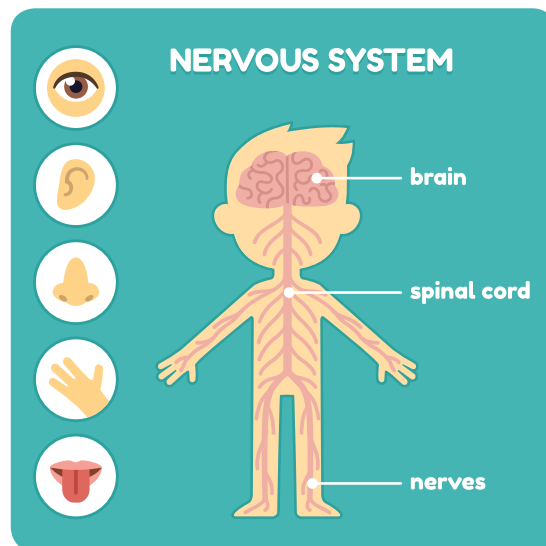


movie can help teach others and create an environment for success at school. It is sometimes helpful to have everyone in your class write the same thing. While they are writing either you or your teacher can have them do a "tic", such as clapping their hands every time the teacher makes a noise. This activity would help your classmates to understand what it's like to have a tic.

You can get free information and movies from the Tourette Association to help you. You can even have a Tourette Association Youth Ambassador present at your school!

**It's important to understand that there are famous athletes, singers, and actors who have TS. Just like you, it's only part of who they are and doesn't stop someone from doing what they are good at.**

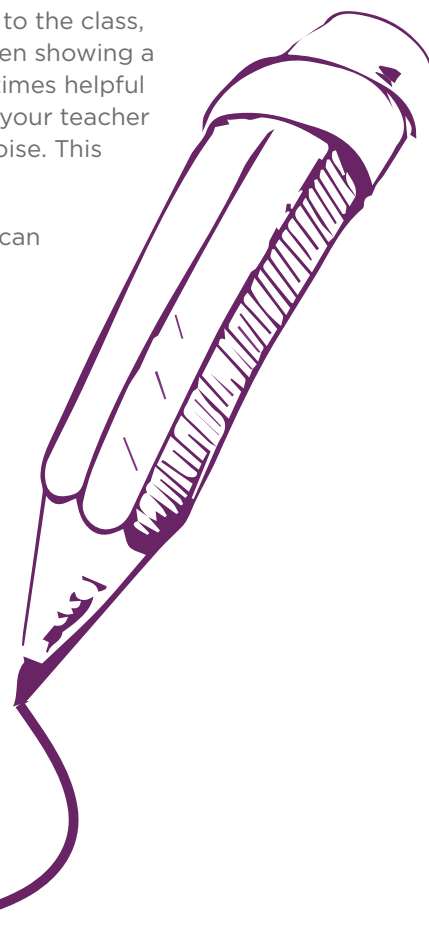
**For parents who would like more information about accommodations in the classroom, click here [tourette.org/family-tool-kit](https://www.tourette.org/family-tool-kit).**



Sometimes you might feel like your tics make it harder for you at school. For example, you might have a hard time writing or paying attention in class. If you ever have a teacher who does not understand what it is like to have TS or tics, you can work with your parents to make sure you are getting the help you need.

Sometimes people are bullied because of their tics. This happens because a lot of people don't understand what TS is. Teaching others about TS and tics can often stop bullying or make it happen less often. If you feel comfortable, you can talk to your parents and school about teaching your classmates and friends about Tourette.

Making a presentation to give to the class, passing out information, or even showing a





**Unscramble the words below**

BLNIGKNI	•••	
BGLUINYL	•••	
TROMO	•••	
STERSS	•••	
GURE	•••	
DYBO	•••	
NGOCIGHU	•••	
GRAE	•••	
CIST	•••	
VOACL	•••	
IABNR	•••	
GSENE	•••	
ENZNSEIG	•••	
RTETOTEU	•••	
WNIRTI	•••	

**Tourette Syndrome Word Search**

S D U C O L A C O V A V  
 O A B W C E S N J F E B  
 U B L R O O N D R T P O  
 R T I I U B E T S O U D  
 O W N T G I E I S U N Y  
 T E K I H Z Z C E R I J  
 O G I N I R I S R E A E  
 M R N G N Z N O T T R G  
 K U G X G Q G Q S T B A  
 N B U L L Y I N G E O R  
 L S Z G E N E S O J V Z  
 O J I C V A O X Q Z A O

BLINKING  
 BULLYING  
 MOTOR  
 STRESS  
 URGE

BODY  
 COUGHING  
 RAGE  
 TICS  
 VOCAL

BRAIN  
 GENES  
 SNEEZING  
 TOURETTE  
 WRITING



## TOURETTE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

Founded in 1972, the Tourette Association of America is dedicated to making life better for all individuals affected by Tourette and Tic Disorders. The Association is the premier nationwide organization serving this community, working to raise awareness, advance research and scientific understanding, and provide on-going support. The Tourette Association directs a network of 32 Chapters and more than 80 support groups across the country. For more information on Tourette and Tic Disorders, call 888-4-TOURET, visit [www.tourette.org](http://www.tourette.org), and search “Tourette Association” on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.

### THE TOURETTE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA'S YOUTH AMBASSADOR (YA) PROGRAM

The Tourette Association of America's Youth Ambassador Program trains teens to talk about Tourette and Tic Disorders, to advocate for themselves and for others, and to provide their peers and younger children with accurate information. Youth Ambassadors teach understanding, sensitivity, and tolerance of TS and its symptoms, while dispelling the myths and stereotypes that are often attributed to and associated with TS and other Tic Disorders. Through this program, young people can speak to peers at schools, sports leagues, camps, after school programs, and similar venues, as well as in front of local and national politicians. Youth Ambassadors play an important role in increasing awareness and understanding of Tourette Syndrome and Tic Disorders in the community.

For more information about the Youth Ambassador Program, to apply to be a Youth Ambassador, or request a Youth Ambassador presentation at your school or organization, please contact the Tourette Association.



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Awareness. Research. Support.

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