

I laughed when I saw the cartoon scene from this podcast, of a boy talking to his teacher, and giving a very weak excuse as to(1) why he hadn't done his homework. I remember telling a similar tale(2) to the principal of my elementary school. However, all those years ago, we didn't have computers, and we certainly had never heard of technology viruses. I told him that my mother had burned my homework. "She burned it?" he exclaimed, looking at me with judging eyes. Of course, he knew that I was lying, and I knew that he knew. Why did I even try to lie to my principal? I suppose I was scared of his anger; I didn't expect him to be ok with me not doing(3) the homework. Plus it's always easy to blame your mother when she's not around. I come across similar situations with my children, "Robert, why didn't you clean up your mess?" An answer to that is often, "Domini didn't clean up hers either." In English we call it 'pointing the finger'. We mention someone else's fault to make ourselves look better, and feel less guilty. Nowadays, of course, we are not limited to blaming our mothers, brothers and sisters, or our family pets (children are known to say that the dog ate the homework). We can now add computers, printers, and viruses to the list.

1. The use of 'as to' in the first sentence. It's a little bit old fashioned, but still sounds good in sentences that we are trying to stretch out, or lengthen. It means the same as 'regarding' or 'concerning'. It also sounds less formal than 'regarding' or 'concerning' and that is often why it is used.

a. I'd like to hear an explanation from you as to why you fired Jim and then hired Bob.

b. I understand the project, but I don't have a clue as to

how it will be financed.

2. 'Tale' means a story. It is often used as a kind way of saying 'a lie'.

a. I don't believe what she was saying; I think she was telling a little tale.

b. The fishermen always tell tales about the giant fish that escaped from the net.

3. 'To be ok with something' means that a person is comfortable or agrees with a situation.

a. Are you ok with me coming to your house at 10pm?

b. I'm not ok with this situation; it makes me feel uncomfortable.

c. I can't believe that you're ok with your noisy neighbors.