

# Functional Communication

is the ability to clearly communicate basic wants and needs independently and spontaneously.

*The most important skill you can teach your toddler is functional communication.*



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# Why functional communication?

Academic skills are important...  
at the right time.

If you only target academic skills, your toddler will be unable to communicate wants and needs with their parents, caregivers, teachers, peers, or community helpers.



# What do I do?

*Consider what is most important to your child and begin there.*

Target words relevant to your child's favorite toys, foods or activities first.

A child is more likely to produce a word for something they are motivated by or really enjoy.



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# Are learning colors, letters, shapes, and numbers bad?

Colors, letters, shapes, and numbers are academic concepts. These concepts are important to learn at the right time.

It's not bad to know these academic concepts early but the focus should be on your child's functional communication.



How to use the strength of academic concepts to expand their vocabulary.

If your child is motivated colors, letters, numbers, and shapes, try this:

For numbers, maybe they get "3 crackers" with the focus being on the new word "cracker." If they like colors, they may get a "red truck" with the focus being on the new word "truck."



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