# Functional Communication at Home

Functional communication means teaching a practical way to express a need. The goal is to make communication easier and more effective than relying on challenging behavior.

## Start with a meaningful request

• Notice what the child may need: a break, help, attention, a preferred item, more time, or relief from discomfort.

• Choose an accessible response: spoken words, sign, gesture, picture, or AAC. Honor the learner's established communication system.

• Model and prompt the request gently, then respond promptly when possible.

• Practice when the child is calm and successful; gradually use the skill in natural routines.

• If a request cannot be granted immediately, acknowledge it, explain simply, and offer a realistic alternative.

## Examples in everyday routines

| Situation | Communication to teach | Caregiver response |
|---|---|---|
| Homework feels difficult | "Help" or help symbol | Provide assistance or break the task into steps. |
| Playtime ends | "More time" or timer symbol | Acknowledge request; offer a clear, realistic transition. |
| Caregiver is busy | "Excuse me" / attention card | Respond as soon as practical and reinforce appropriate bids. |
| Noise feels overwhelming | "Quiet" / "Headphones" / "Break" | Offer a quieter space or sensory support. |

## Practice planner

Routine: _____ Need/request: _____

Communication form (speech / AAC / sign / gesture): _____

How we will model it: _____

How we will respond: _____

What worked / what to adjust: _____

## Helpful reminders

• Communication attempts count even if they are imperfect. Avoid requiring eye contact or speech when another form works.

• Do not withhold access to essential needs, comfort, or safety to force a request.

• For persistent or high-risk behavior, seek individualized support from a qualified professional.