

20 Most Functional Verbs

For Early Communication



20 Most Functional Verbs (Action Words) for Early Communication

These action words are highly functional because they are useful across many daily routines, can be paired with a variety of nouns and descriptors, and help meet a child's immediate needs.

Want	Close/ shut	Eat	Make
Help	Put	Drink	Turn
Stop	Get	Take	Play
Go	See	Give	Stand
Open	Look	Wash	Sit

The guide below groups the verbs by everyday routines and includes examples for modelling them naturally.

1. Mealtime

- Eat – Model during meals or snack times – 'Eat apple', 'Eat more'
- Drink – Model when offering drinks – 'Drink water', 'Drink milk'
- Open – When opening containers or packets – 'Open lid', 'Open bag'
- Close/Shut – When closing lunchboxes, fridges, lids – 'Close box', 'Shut door'

2. Playtime

- Go – When starting movement – 'Go car', 'Go swing'
- Stop – When halting play – 'Stop car', 'Stop bubbles'
- Play – Encouraging participation – 'Play ball', 'Play game'
- Look – Drawing attention – 'Look cat', 'Look here'
- See – When noticing something – 'See bird', 'See blocks'

3. Self-Care & Daily Routines

- Wash – During hygiene routines – 'Wash hands', 'Wash face'
- Sit – Transitioning to seated activities – 'Sit chair', 'Sit down'
- Stand – Transitioning to standing – 'Stand up', 'Stand there'
- Put – During tidying or placing items – 'Put away', 'Put on shoes'

4. Requesting & Getting Needs Met

- Help – When needing assistance – 'Help me', 'Help open'
- Take – When removing or accepting items – 'Take off hat', 'Take toy'
- Give – When handing items – 'Give ball', 'Give book'
- Get – When retrieving items – 'Get shoes', 'Get book'
- Want – Expressing desires – 'Want more', 'Want toy'

5. Making & Creating

- Make – During art, cooking, or pretend play – 'Make tower', 'Make cake'
- Turn – useful for play or reading 'turn page', 'turn around', 'turn on'