

**Exercise: What are functional skills and behaviors?
Answers and Explanations**

Look at the list of skills below. Which are examples of isolated skills? Which are examples of functional skills?

Skill	Functional	Isolated
1. Knows how to imitate a gesture when prompted by others -- ‘isolated’ – because knowing how to imitate a gesture does not necessarily mean that a child can gesture spontaneously for a specific purpose. A more functional skill would be, for example, ‘uses gestures to indicate his preference for toys during play time.’		x
2. Uses finger in pointing motion – ‘isolated’-- because the child’s ability to point does not necessarily indicate that a child can use pointing for a functional purpose, such as to communicate wants and needs.		x
3. Uses 2-word utterances -- ‘isolated’ because, by itself, the fact that a child can put together two words does not tell you whether the child is using words purposely, such as to convey a message.		x
4. Watches what a peer says or does and incorporates it into his/her own play -- ‘functional’ because it reflects the child’s ability to observe other children and imitate their behavior in a meaningful way.	x	
5. Points to indicate needs or wants – more functional than the skill described in #2, above. In this example, the skill indicates that the child can point for a specific purpose.	x	
6. Engages in back and forth verbal exchanges with caregivers using 2-word utterances -- as opposed to #3, above, this skill is more functional because it describes a meaningful use of words.	x	
7. Uses pincer grasp – isolated. It would be more functional to assess how a child applies the use of a pincer grasp in everyday life.		x



8. Can eat dry cereal with fingers-- more functional than #7, above, because it describes the purpose, rather than just the presence or absence, of fine motor skills.	x	
9. Touches toy or adult's hand to restart an activity -- also a functional skill, because it emphasizes purposeful movement.	x	
10. Makes stepping movements -- a child's ability to make stepping movements, without looking at how he or she uses that ability, is an example of an isolated skill.		x
11. Moves toward a ball in order to continue play activity -- – a functional skill because it describes the child's purpose in moving toward a ball, not just his or her ability to do so.	x	

