

## Teaching Object Function

Learning the function of objects is an important language processing skill. Language processing is how we attach increasingly more complex meaning to information we receive and how we form responses. This is important in how children develop their understanding of language and retrieve the correct words as they speak.

When learning language processing skills, young children first learn to label basic **nouns** (names of people, places or things) and then learn **verbs or action words**. As they develop, they next learn the functions of items. This means that the child learns what you do with an item (e.g. “you write with a pencil”). This is a very important step in language development for young children.

Here is the order in which you can teach object function to your child:

- 1) Label the function of a variety of objects throughout your day by linking the object to the verb (e.g. a fork is for eating, a bed is for sleeping, a ball is for rolling and throwing).
- 2) Once you have labelled the items, ask your child to “show you”. Start with real objects. For example, show them a banana and a car. Then ask, “Show me which one is for eating?” If the child shows you the correct answer, praise them, and if they do not, then provide a model of the correct answer, by saying that a banana is for eating and a car is for playing.
- 3) Once the child can show you the object that is related to the correct function with *real objects*, then use *pictures*. First, talk about the items you see on the pages to ensure your child understands what the objects are, and then ask your child to show you an object by function (“Can you show me what you use to clean your teeth?” Answer: toothbrush).
- 4) The last step is asking your child a function question (e.g. “Think of something used for cutting”) and your child will have to think of their own object. First do this using the extra support of pictures and then for a more challenging activity, ask without the additional support of choosing from pictures or objects your child can see.