

How to Help Your Child with Math Problem Solving

Jot Down Ideas

Jot down a plan for how you will be solving the problem. You might list the important information or draw a diagram of the problem to get you started.

Restate the Problem in Your Own Words

Are you unsure of how to begin? Reread the problem and then state it in your own words. You need to understand the problem before you can go any further.

Cross Off Unnecessary Information

Is the problem confusing or containing too much data? Reread the problem and cross out the unnecessary data to simplify the problem.

Substitute with Simpler Numbers

Does the problem contain larger numbers, fractions, or decimals that are confusing you? Substitute simpler numbers for the confusing numbers and then figure out how to solve the problem. Once you know how the problem should be solved, just plug the more complicated numbers back into the problem and repeat the process to solve it.

Take a Break

Are you too frustrated to go on? Take a break for a few minutes. Think about or do something else. Then return to the problem refreshed and ready to begin again.

Use a manipulative

Use everyday objects (paper clips, toothpicks, pennies) to represent the items in the problem. Act out the problem with the manipulatives.

Talk the Problem Through

Talk out loud to yourself or to someone else. Explain the problem and what you think you should do. Listen to yourself as you talk to see if it makes sense.

Think of a Similar Problem

Does this problem remind you of another that you've solved? How did you solve that one? Try that strategy. Does it work here?

Try a Different Strategy

What you're doing doesn't seem to be working. Try something else. Is there a different strategy that you think might work? Try it and see.

Give Yourself a Pep Talk

Think of a problem you solved by sticking with it. Remember a time when you were frustrated but kept trying until you found the answer. Remind yourself that you can do it!