

Parent Resource

Pre-K Helping Your Child Solve Problems

Children feel confident and empowered when they can participate in problem solving situations. A positive self concept is developed when your child can participate in finding solutions, communicating their ideas, contributing to the situational success. This article from [Scholastic Pre-K Today](#) provides simple assistance for communicating through the process.



PRE-K TIPS FOR PARENTS

Helping Your Child Solve Problems

Children feel good when they are able to work a problem out on their own. Experiencing this kind of success fosters self-esteem and encourages a positive attitude toward learning. So, whether the problem involves a toy that isn't working or a misunderstanding with a playmate, use the dilemma to tackle problem-solving together. Here are steps that will help your child develop problem-solving skills.

1. IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM. Even the youngest children know when they have a problem, but they may need help recognizing the cause. If your child is only two, you can show him or her how the process works by pointing and making observations such as, "Look, Your Big Wheel is too wide to fit through the door. Let's see what we can do." Or, if your child's language skills are more developed, you can ask questions that will get him or her to think about what is causing the trouble: "Can you tell me what's wrong? What do you want to do with this little box?"

2. COME UP WITH POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS. Young children tend to be impatient and try to implement the first "solution" that comes to their minds. Help your child learn to look for alternatives: "What else do you think we could do?" or "Let's try to find another way."

3. MAKE SURE YOU HAVE ALL THE INFORMATION. Sometimes this means looking at books together. Often it means participating in discussions: "Let's find out why Neal is angry and doesn't want you to play."

4. ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO ASK FOR HELP. Make sure your child understands that it's okay to ask for assistance in solving a problem, and that it's fun when problem-solving is a shared activity. Try saying things like, "You're doing a good job stacking those pieces of wood. You can call me when you find some that are too heavy. I'd like to help if you think I can."

5. GIVE IT A TRY. After you and your child have spent some time thinking about the cause of the problem and some possible solutions, encourage him or her to try out the most likely one. Help your child to be realistic about the outcome ("Let's see if this works.") and to follow up with a second and third choice if necessary. ("Well, that didn't hold it together ... Should we see if this will?")

6. HELP THE PROCESS BE ITS OWN REWARD. Your enthusi-

astic and specific observations will encourage your child to tune in to the intrinsic satisfaction in problem-solving and to repeat the process in the future: "Boy, you must feel good about figuring out how to play quietly while Mommy talked to Aunt Sharon!"

Remember ...

- **Focus on problems your child really cares about.** Resist trying to get him or her to problem-solve in areas outside his or her own interests.
- **Show you care, too!** It supports your child if he or she senses you take a problem seriously.
- **Praise all of your child's problem-solving ideas, even if they're far off the mark.** This will encourage him or her to explore, experiment, and be creative.
- **Remember, some solutions just won't be acceptable to you.** In these cases, it's helpful if you come up with appropriate alternatives together.
- **Be completely honest.** There are some problems in life that just cannot be solved. It's important for your child to know this, too. □

Adapted with permission from *Getting Involved: Your Child and Problem Solving* by Ben-Gene Han, Ph.D., Judy David, M.Ed., Barbara L. Lewis, M.Ed., and Karen Sato von Hippel, Ph.D., U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Head Start Bureau, 1981.

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