

Problem Solving Skills

When playing with children, ask yourself:
“Does this activity help with a child’s problem solving skills?”



Milestones for Problem Solving Skills

12-15 month old babies

- Understand that an object is still there when she can't see it (e.g. hidden under a blanket)
- Begin to solve problems through observation and imitation

15-18 month old babies

- Recognize and find familiar objects in storybooks with some help
- Experiment with a little bit of everything in the persistent search for a solution

2 year old

- Begin to match similar objects
- Begin to use memory as a problem solving tool
- Can observe, think about the problem, and then later on remember what she saw and imitate it

3 year old

- Understand simple stories
- Respond to simple directions
- Name some objects in a book
- Group objects by category (e.g. animals, clothing, food)
- Stack rings on a peg in order of size
- Put together simple puzzles (3-4 piece inset puzzles)
- Solve problems through trial and error, depending primarily on senses rather than reasoning
- Uses imagination to solve problems as they arise
- Become frustrated in problem-solving attempts because he/she can see only one possible solution — which may not be workable, and give up

4 year old

- Be able to sort and match things (e.g. recognize and match colours)
- Organize things by size
- Identify parts of a whole, such as the wheel of the car
- Draw a very simple picture and be able to tell you what it is (you might not recognize it)
- Use “why?” and “how?” questions
- More patient than a three year old and can try out different solutions
- With a larger vocabulary, he/she is ready to negotiate with others
- Developing language skills help them work together and engage in group decision-making. With practice, they learn to choose from various solutions

5 year old

- Point to and name many colours and shapes
- Learn to identify a few letters and numbers
- Draw, name, and describe pictures
- Follow the rules to games, but sometimes change them as she goes
- Developing an ability to tolerate frustration allows the 5 year old to take time to observe and identify the problem, try out a few solutions, and draw a conclusion
- Emotional maturity provides them with greater security to take risks - and even make mistakes
- Abstract thinking allows child to think about a solution without having to actually try it out
- Less egocentric, 5 year olds have an increased awareness of other people's problems

Educational activities that encourage problem solving

Books

Matching games

Water and sand tables

Measuring cups, spoons, pots

Utensils (spoon, fork)

Pretend play

Dress-up clothing

Toy animals

Trucks, cars

Puzzles

Laces, beads, buttons

Locks, keys

Tongs, pompoms

Sorting

Stacking/nesting toys

Number/letter recognition

Discussing and engaging children in play, asking “how, what, why”

Board games that encourage empathy, cooperation



Correlation

Our program helps children learn how to solve their own problems, which scaffolds into becoming empathetic with others.