

Problem-Solving Skills

- How do I write a paper for English and study for a test in history between tonight and Wednesday?
- Fluid is leaking from my car; I wonder how serious it is?
- My friend is having trouble with her parents and she keeps calling me to help. I have a project that is due Friday. I want to be a good friend, but I don't want to do poorly on my project, what should I do?

Mastering problems

Every day you encounter problems that require your attention. Some problems are easier to deal with than others. How do you deal with the problems that are more complicated? This kind of problem solving calls for strategy. Begin by asking questions:

Defining the Problem:

1. What are you trying to solve?
2. What are the facts?
3. Do you need additional information before brainstorming solutions?
4. Which parts of the problem are most critical to finding a solution?
5. Is there some information that can be ignored?

Brainstorming Possible Solutions:

1. What are the positive outcomes you can expect?
2. What are the negative outcomes that could occur?

Evaluating the Solution:

1. What were the positive outcomes that occurred?
2. What were the negative outcomes that occurred?

Try it for yourself

Think of a problem that you have been trying to solve and use the above steps to brainstorm possible solutions and implement a plan of action.

You also may find it useful to create a problem-solving picture to help you evaluate possible solutions while pondering the problem (see below).

