

Target Ball—Problem Solving

What the Research Says

- Problem Solving is the foundation of early learning.
- Problem solving is a major focus in math today. For preschoolers this means letting them explore and experiment and observe.
- Introducing children to different challenges helps them learn that there are many different ways to solve a problem.
- In problem solving, children apply concepts as they work at finding answers to questions they raise or find on their own. Problem solving involves the ability to think through an issue in order to find a possible solution.
- In addition to math, problem solving builds language and social skills such as working together, taking turns, and following directions.

Target Ball—Problem Solving

Activities for Families

- Create an “Obstacle Course.” Have your child plan, organize, and set up an obstacle course inside or outside your house. Talk with your child about how big the course should be. What items will they need to use? How will they use these items so that someone has to go over, under, around, and through the obstacles? Let your child come up with possibilities. Attempt to execute the course together. Have your child come up with revisions, as needed.
- Go on a “Pirate Adventure Scavenger Hunt.” Create a set of clues that lead to a prize (small bag of candy, cookies, 25 pennies, etc.). Have one clue lead to the next clue, to the next clue, and so on. Hide these clues inside and outside your house. Attempt to add some physical exercise to the game by placing some of the clues inside, outside, upstairs, and downstairs. Encourage your child to solve some kind of problem at each “clue spot.” For example, put a nut on a bolt, measure $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of water and dump it into a plastic container, etc.
- Take a “Family Bingo Hike.” Before you go create a 5 x 5 square grid (25 spaces) bingo board. Work with your child to figure out different things you might see on your hike (pinecone, acorn, leaf, maple tree, squirrel, yellow flower dog, fire hydrant, stop sign, etc.) Then in each one of the squares write the word or draw a picture of one of the items. When you are done, take the hike! After finishing the first hike, have your child create a bingo board for items inside your house.

Target Ball—Problem Solving Advice for Families

- Your child will learn from you as think out loud and share your ideas as you solve everyday problems. Share your ideas, thinking out loud, as you solve everyday problems. Your child will learn from your thinking.
- Model for your child how you solve everyday problems. For example, talk about what you can use to stir the orange juice if you don't have a large spoon. Could you use a long spatula? Let your child suggest solutions to simple problems
- Let your child explore how to put all the pans/bowls/Tupperware into the cupboard so they all fit.
- Children learn best when they find answers for themselves. Give your child time to think about problems. Give your child time to think about problems and solutions. Children learn best when they find answers for themselves.
- As they complete activities, have your child tell you what they are thinking. Ask your child to explain their thinking after they complete a task. Language and thinking work hand in hand.
- Don't worry if they don't get the answer you would have. They are learning how to think through a problem and may have a different way of approaching it.
- Work on social skills development by talking together before, during, and after playing games. Think about:
 1. Figuring out what are the rules we need to follow when playing the game?
 2. Discussing the directions for playing the game.
 3. Deciding who will go first and how will you fairly take turns.
 4. Playing the game according to the rules that were established.
 5. Helping to pick up the game and put it back where it belongs.
 6. Establishing any consequences for positive and negative choices before you start playing.