

Solving Your Problem in Five Simple Steps

Objective

To solve a problem using five simple steps.

What to Know

Problem solving is the process of identifying a problem, developing possible solutions, and taking appropriate actions. The ability to solve problems is a basic life skill that's essential to your day-to-day life at home, work, or school. You probably solve problems every day without really thinking about it.

To develop your problem-solving skills, focus on the why, what, and how of the problem. Ask yourself the following five questions.

- 1. Why should I care about this problem?** Describe your problem using specific details. Instead of, "I spend too much money on takeout," a better statement is, "In 2021, I spent an average of \$300 each month on takeout food." Think about why this problem is an issue for you – or why you should care.
- 2. What does success look like?** Write down what you want to achieve by solving this problem. Focus on the goal, not the solution. For example, "In 2022, I'll spend 50% less each month on takeout food."
- 3. How can I solve this problem?** Now think about solutions to your problem. You might find out as much as you can about it, or search for resources that can help you solve it. Maybe there is someone who can help you. Brainstorm as many solutions as possible. Ask for help from others if you get stuck.
- 4. How should I *actually* solve the problem?** Look at your list of possible solutions and identify which is the best one.
- 5. How can I take action?** Make a simple step-by-step plan to solve your problem. Remember that no matter how well you plan, things will change, and your plan might change, too.

Problem solving can be an easy process if you follow these steps. This worksheet will help you follow the five simple steps to solve your problem.

What to Do

Describe your problem.

1. Why should you care about this problem?

2. What does success look like? Or, how will you know you solved the problem?

3. How can you solve this problem? Write down as many solutions as possible. Use additional paper if you need more space.

4. How should you actually solve the problem? Pick one solution from the list above and write down why it's the best solution.

5. How can you take action? You can use the following chart to write down all the actions that make up your problem-solving steps. Write down when each step should be done. In the final column, check off when each action step is complete.

Action step to solve your problem	Due date	Completed?

Did this activity help you solve your problem? Why or why not?

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?
