

Step-by-Step Problem Solving with Children

Do you think children under the age of five are too young to solve their own problems? Try guiding them through the steps of problem solving and you'll find that they can be creative and thoughtful problem solvers.

1. **Stop the children as soon as you see a problem starting. Don't let the conflict get worse. Adult says, "You have a problem." Adult describes what you think the conflict is about. For example: "Destiny and Felicia both want the truck." If you are wrong about what is going on, the children will tell you; then state the problem simply in your own words.**

What does the teacher do to help children identify the problem?

2. **Ask each child what can be done to handle the conflict.**

Make sure the children take turns talking and don't allow one child to interrupt another. For young children, the adult may have to repeat what the child says to make sure the other child understands. Communication needs to be solution-focused and respectful. No name calling or other rude communication is permitted. Listen to each child carefully.

What does the teacher do to help children identify possible solutions?

3. **Select a positive solution that each of the children can agree on.**

You might not agree with the solution the children choose. Let them try it and figure it out. Then help them find a better solution. Remember: the solution should come from the children, not from an adult. If the children can't agree, ask other children for their ideas and keep trying until both children agree to a solution. Sometimes children will get bored with the process and decide to agree or even walk away. This is an OK way to solve a problem in preschool.

Describe the solution that the children chose on the video. What did the teacher do to help the children decide on the solution?

4. **Follow through.**

Sometimes the solution works but sometimes it doesn't. Problem solve again if the solution isn't successful. What can the children and teacher do for follow through?
