

Problem solving

Children's Therapy Services Patient information

Problem solving is a way of helping your child learn to do things on their own. Occupational therapists use it a lot. You can use it at home too. This factsheet gives you ideas to help your child learn how to solve problems by themselves.

Why Is problem solving important?

Children learn by trying things out. When they work something out on their own, they understand it better. For example, toddlers fall many times when learning to walk. They keep trying until they work out how to stay standing.

When children solve problems themselves, they remember the skill for longer than if an adult simply tells them what to do.

A helpful strategy: **Goal - Plan - Do - Check**

This strategy helps children think for themselves and find their own solutions. It builds skills like **planning, organising, checking their work, and fixing mistakes**.

Goal

Ask your child to choose something they want to get better at. It must be meaningful to them, so they stay motivated.

Examples:

- **Make handwriting neater**
- **Swim without aids**
- **Score a football goal**
- **Build a Lego set**

Plan

Help your child think of a plan. Ask them to say their plan out loud and focus on one small part at a time.

Examples:

- Move my chair closer to the table
- Kick arms and legs like a frog
- Aim my body at the goal
- Read instructions step by step

Do

Your child tries their plan.

Check

Ask your child if their plan worked.

- If **yes**, build on it and move to the next step.
- If **no**, help them think of a new plan and try again.

Helpful questions to guide your child

Use these when your child gets stuck:

- **What could you change?**
- **Can you move your body differently?**
- **Can you change something about the task?**
- **Here is how I do it... what is different about your way?**
- **Is your plan working?**
- **What else could you try?**

Remember

- Support your child's ideas, even if they don't work at first.
- Everyone learns in different ways. A plan that looks unusual might still work well.
- Give your child time to practise and discover what works best for them.
- For example, your child might want to try **using cutlery in opposite hands** to see if it helps - let them explore.

Contact details

Children's Therapy Services

Telephone number: **0300 019 2936**

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