

Problem Solving in the Early Years

Infant



I can...

Begin to explore cause & effect

Interact with my world through observation and imitation

Explore the world through my senses

Toddler



I can...

Experiment with objects to learn about them

Work things out through repetition

Use my memory of previous interactions to help me solve problems

Preschool



I can...

Think of solutions to the problems I experience

Begin working cooperatively with others to solve problems

Start to reflect on my use of problem-solving strategies

Kindergarten



I can...

Persist longer through the frustration of a problem

Begin to think about problems I haven't directly experienced (abstract thinking)

Reflect more critically on others' problems, even if they're not my own

Nurturing Problem Solving in Young Children

Infant

- Delight in my discoveries! Everything is new to me!
- Show me how to play with different objects
- Offer me new things to explore; place them within my reach
- Let me explore using all my senses
- Narrate my actions
- Spend time in serve and return interactions that encourage imitation

Toddler

- Offer materials with moving parts
- Show me how, then let me try
- Let me try to figure out how to do things before offering help.
- Allow me the opportunity to use repetition to figure things out.
- Show me how to communicate when I have a problem. (e.g.?)
- Ask me open ended questions; wait for my response.
- Support peer interactions by staying close; help me to share and take turns

Preschool/ Kindergarten

- Use visuals to help me remember how to problem solve and find solutions
- Create intentional opportunities to practice problem solving with peers (e.g. collaborative materials)
- Encourage me to think of solutions before offering suggestions
- Notice my problem-solving with positive descriptive feedback
- Help me reflect on my use of problem-solving
- Model and narrate your own use of problem-solving