

# Problem-Solving — Guide —



# Problem-Solving Guide

Feeling worried or anxious can sometimes make it difficult to make decisions and work out how to solve problems.

Problem-solving is a practical way of breaking big problems down in a step-by-step process to make them easier to think about so you can start finding solutions.

This problem-solving guide is designed to take you through this process to help you work through any problems you might be facing.

## How to problem-solve

### Step 1: Identify the problem

- Choose one problem that you're having at the moment.
- Break it down into smaller parts to make it clearer and easier to work on.

*For example, the problem: "I'm broke" could be broken down to: "My electricity bill is due next Wednesday, and I am unable to pay it."*

- Try to concentrate on only one problem at a time. If other problems arise, write them down to tackle in the future.

### Step 2: Find solutions through brainstorming

- Brainstorm as many possible solutions as you can.
- Get help from friends or family or think of what options they might come up with.
- List all solutions that come to mind.
- Use your imagination. Even solutions that sound impossible can spark new ideas.

### Step 3: Check over your solutions

- Look at all the pros and cons of each solution.
- Either write these points down or run through them in your mind.

#### **Step 4: Choose your solution and create a plan of action**

- Decide what might help, consider the questions below then plan what you are going to do.

#### **Questions to help your planning:**

*What is needed to make this work (e.g., how much time, things you might need)?*

*Can others help me? If so, who can I ask?*

- Choose a plan that you can easily carry out.
- Plan it out step-by-step.

#### **Step 5: Review what happened**

- Ask yourself what has been achieved and what still needs to be done?
- If the problem hasn't been solved, go back and try to problem solve again using this guide.

Use the worksheet on the next page to give problem-solving a go.

**Tip:** If you're thinking right now makes it difficult to see the problem clearly, try using our Seeing Things Clearly worksheet to help you challenge some of your thoughts.



# Your Problem Solving Worksheet

Please read an example below and write your own example in the right-hand column

|   | Example problem  | Your example |
|---|--|--------------|
| <p><b>Step 1: What is the problem?</b></p> <p>Think about this carefully and write down exactly what the problem is.</p> <p><b>Tip:</b> Make it clear and simple, so it is easier to think about.</p> | <p><i>I don't have enough money to pay my electricity bill.</i></p>  |              |
| <p><b>Step 2: List all the possible solutions.</b></p> <p><b>Put down all ideas, good or bad.</b></p>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>1) Ask a friend for a loan.</i></li><li><i>2) Ring the company and ask for more time to pay.</i></li><li><i>3) Contact Citizens Advice Bureau for help.</i></li><li><i>4) Do nothing and hope the problem goes away.</i></li></ol>  |              |
| <p><b>Step 3: Evaluate each possible solution.</b></p> <p><b>Tip:</b> Go down the list of all possible solutions and consider the pros and cons of each one.</p>                                      | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>1) Friends don't have much money to spare, and they might feel annoyed.</i></li><li><i>2) The company could let me pay it off in smaller amounts over time, but I feel embarrassed asking.</i></li><li><i>3) Free, quick and could be helpful.</i></li><li><i>4) The easiest option, but the problem will only get worse.</i></li></ol> |              |

|  | Example problem  | Your responses |
|--|--|----------------|
| <p><b>Step 4: Choose the best or most practical solution.</b></p> <p><b>Tip:</b> Choose the solution that can be carried out to most easily solve (or begin to solve) the problem.</p>                     | <p><i>Ring the electricity company to ask for more time to pay the bill.</i></p>   |                |
| <p><b>Step 5: Make a step-by-step plan on how to carry out the best solution.</b></p> <p><b>Tip:</b> Include when you will do it and how you will do it.</p>   | <p><i>1) Look up phone number online.</i></p> <p><i>2) Call on Monday morning.</i></p> <p><i>3) Take some deep breaths and remember why it's important to call them.</i></p> <p><i>4) Make the call.</i></p> |                |
| <p><b>Plan a time to review progress.</b></p>  | <p><i>Review Monday, 6 pm.</i></p>   |                |
| <p><b>Step 6: Review progress.</b></p> <p>Ask yourself what has been achieved and what still needs to be done?</p> <p><b>Tip:</b> Consider using the worksheet again to help you keep problem solving.</p> | <p><i>I made the call, and the person I spoke to was really nice.</i></p> <p><i>She agreed that I could set up a direct debit with smaller weekly sums to get the bill paid.</i></p>                         |                |
| <p><b>What still needs to be done. Plan your next steps?</b></p> <p><b>Tip:</b> If you come across another problem, consider using this sheet again to help try and solve it.</p>                          | <p><i>I need to set up the direct debit with my bank.</i></p>  |                |