

Problem Solving (individual or group)

1. Clarify the problem: Do you understand what is being asked? If not, what can you do to find out? Re-read and consider. If still not clear, ask classmates, tutor, LAC consultant, or instructor.
2. What do you know: Start here. Begin with what you already know about the problem. List, discuss, outline, draw, and/or brainstorm everything that you and/or those in the group know.
3. What is needed: Next step. What do you need that you don't already know or understand? Investigate: read text, review notes, and/or research. Become familiar with information necessary to work on the problem.
4. Possible solutions: Brainstorm, list, and discuss all possible solutions. There may only be one solution, or there may be more than one.
5. Evaluate solutions: Evaluate through discussion, reflection, reviewing, and/or checking (math). Does the solution/answer make sense? Does the solution/answer work?

Strategies:

- Think aloud. Problem solving is a cognitive, mental process. Thinking aloud or talking through the steps of solving a problem can be helpful.
- Allow time to process. Solutions and ideas can form if given time. Separate yourself from the problem—distance can clear the mind and provide a new or different perspective.
- Discuss the problem. Talking to someone else can sometimes bring a problem to clarity. It may also provide an avenue for a solution to surface.