

Problem Solving Activities

5th - 8th Grade

Identifying Possible Solutions 1

Read the story and answer the questions.

Seth, Matt, and Ben are at Camp Waconda. Seth and Ben have been to camp before, so they know the ropes. It's Matt's first time.

Matt is excited to be at camp, but he's a little nervous to be away from home. Seth and Ben want to help Matt get over his camper jitters.



1. What is the problem?

- (A) Matt is nervous about being away from home.
- (B) Matt does not like Camp Waconda.
- (C) Ben and Seth are friends.

2. Choose at least two good solutions.

- (A) Seth and Ben could ignore Matt and hang out with other campers.
- (B) Seth and Ben could include Matt in all their activities.
- (C) Seth and Ben could tell Matt how they felt when they were new to camp.
- (D) Seth and Ben could make fun of Matt for being homesick.
- (E) Matt could talk to Seth and Ben about how he feels.
- (F) Matt could try to make friends with other campers.

3. Tell about a time you helped someone who was nervous or scared. What did you do to help the person feel better?

Identifying Possible Solutions 2

Read the story and answer the questions.

Today is opening day at the Westerfield Zoo. In a few minutes, buses of excited school children will arrive. The zookeepers are frantic! The zoo is not ready for the children. Ten cages still need to be cleaned. The lions, tigers, and bears haven't been fed.



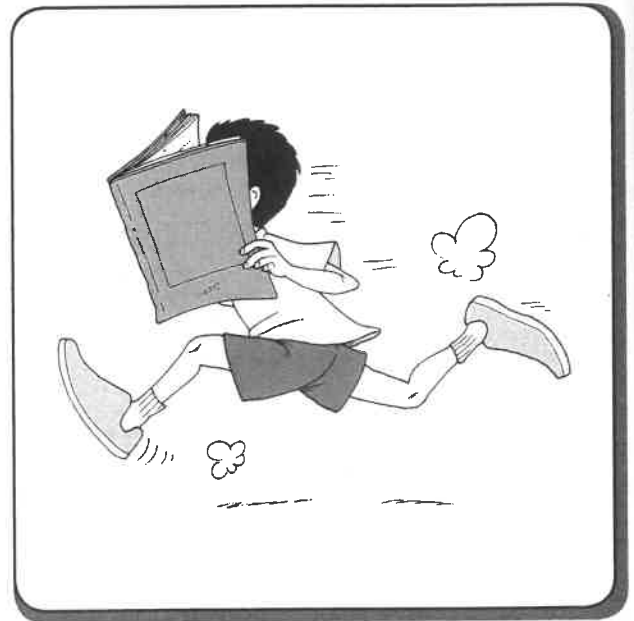
1. What is the problem?
 - (A) Visitors to the zoo aren't allowed to feed the animals.
 - (B) The zoo is not ready for the children to arrive.
 - (C) Only ten animal cages are clean.
2. Choose two good solutions.
 - (A) The children could clean the animal cages and feed the animals.
 - (B) Some zookeepers could teach the children about animals and explain zoo rules while the other zookeepers clean cages and feed the animals.
 - (C) They could close the zoo for the whole season.
 - (D) The children could eat an early lunch while the zookeepers prepare the cages and feed the animals.
3. Tell about a time when you were in a hurry and needed to finish something. What did you do?

Identifying Possible Solutions 3

Read the story and answer the questions.

Ben loves a good book. He'll read all day and even forget to eat. He reads in the car, on the bus, during recess, and before bedtime. Ben would read in his sleep if he could. Reading is a real workout for his brain!

Ben also likes physical exercise. He just joined the track team. He needs to practice running, but that limits his reading time. Ben doesn't want to quit track. What should he do?



1. What is the problem?

- (A) Ben doesn't have time to read and exercise as much as he would like to.
- (B) Ben doesn't get enough sleep and he is too tired to learn at school.
- (C) Ben doesn't read enough because he exercises too much.

2. Choose two good solutions.

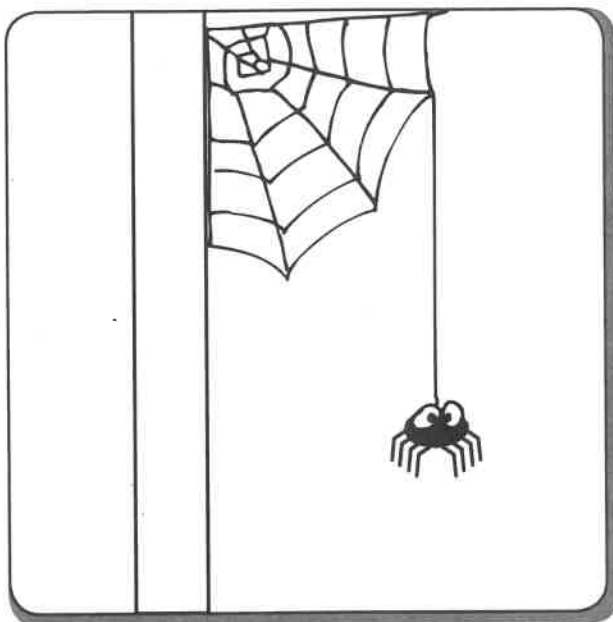
- (A) Ben could quit the track team.
- (B) Ben could read and run at the same time.
- (C) Ben could catch up on reading when track season is over.
- (D) Ben could read while he rests between runs.

3. Name your favorite hobby. If you were busy, how could you still make time to do the thing you love?

Identifying Possible Solutions 4

Read the story and answer the questions.

Sam was an industrious little spider. He spent two days spinning a beautiful web in the corner of an old, dusty barn. When Sam finished, he took a look and thought, "This web will be a super bug-catcher." Sam scampered off. "I'll have dinner when I get back to my web." When Sam returned, his web was gone!



1. What was the problem?

- (A) Sam was lazy.
- (B) Sam's web was gone.
- (C) Sam didn't finish spinning his web.

2. Choose two good solutions.

- (A) Sam could ask another spider to spin a new web for him.
- (B) Sam could eat grass instead of bugs.
- (C) Sam could start over and spin a new web.
- (D) Sam could spin a new web somewhere else.

3. Tell about a time something broke. How did you fix it?

Identifying Possible Solutions 5

Read the story and answer the questions.

Nate was bummed. He had to wrap a present for his aunt's wedding. He would rather play outside with friends. Nate's mom reminded him to measure the box before he cut the paper. He cut the paper without measuring the box, grumbling about how much fun he was missing. He rolled the paper under the box and taped it. Then Nate saw that he didn't cut enough paper to cover the whole box.



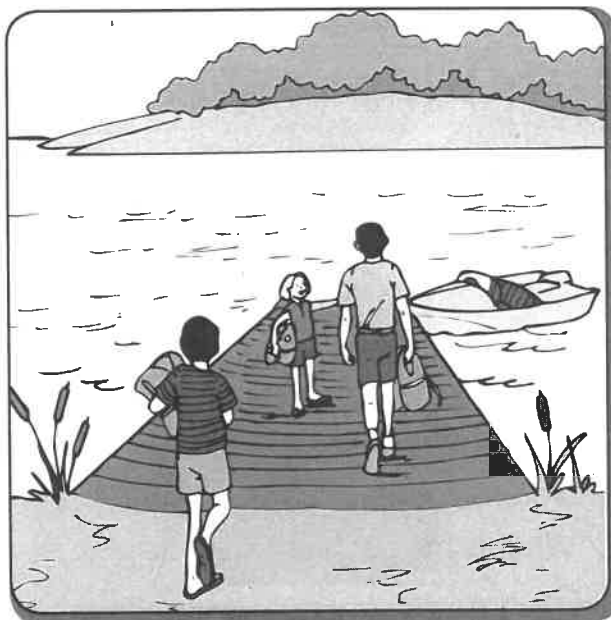
1. What was the problem?
 - (A) Nate doesn't want to go to the wedding.
 - (B) Nate cut too much paper to wrap the present.
 - (C) Nate didn't cut enough paper to wrap the present.
2. Choose two good solutions.
 - (A) Nate could cut a small piece of wrapping paper and use it to cover the gap.
 - (B) Nate could go play basketball with his friends.
 - (C) Nate could measure the box and cut more paper to the right size.
 - (D) Nate could tell his mom to wrap the present.
3. Nate's mom reminded him to measure the box before he cut the paper. Tell about a time you didn't follow directions. What happened? What could you have done differently?

Identifying Possible Solutions 6

Read the story and answer the questions.

Mr. Merle and his kids walked to the lake. They planned to take a boat trip and then eat a picnic lunch at the park.

Each person put on a lifejacket and hopped in the boat. They were about to ship out when Mr. Merle spotted angry storm clouds in the distance. A lightning bolt lit up the sky and thunder rumbled over the lake.



1. What was the problem?

- (A) The Merle family didn't bring lifejackets.
- (B) It was too cloudy to go boating.
- (C) It was dangerous to go boating during a thunderstorm.

2. Choose two good solutions.

- (A) They could leave and eat their picnic lunch inside.
- (B) They could go hiking around the lake during the thunderstorm.
- (C) They could go swimming during the storm.
- (D) They could leave and reschedule their trip and picnic.

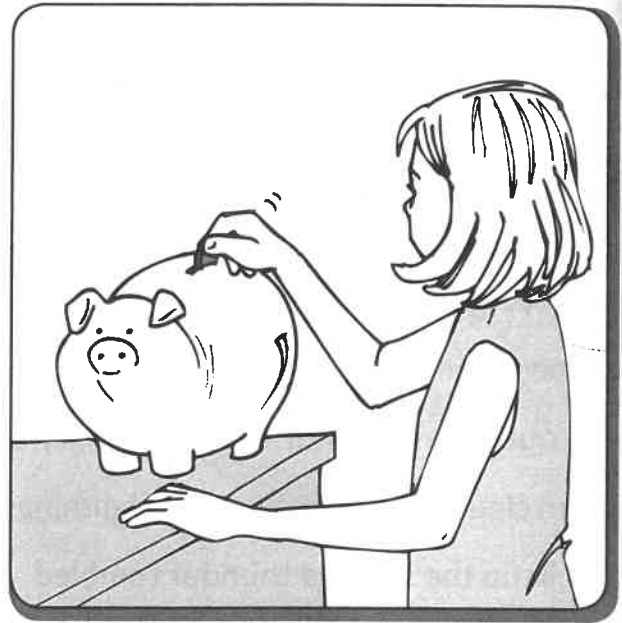
3. The Merle family felt disappointed when the weather changed their plans.

Tell about a time you were disappointed. What did you do to feel better?

Identifying Possible Solutions 7

Read the story and answer the questions.

Erin is in a real pickle. She wants to buy a special gift for her friend's birthday. The gift costs more money than Erin can afford. She saves as much money as she can. The party is two days away and Erin needs seven more dollars to buy the gift.



1. What is the problem?

- Ⓐ Erin didn't get invited to her friend's party.
- Ⓑ Erin doesn't have enough money to buy a special gift.
- Ⓒ Erin's friend wants a special gift.

2. Choose two good solutions.

- Ⓐ Erin could make a special gift or buy one that's less expensive.
- Ⓑ Erin could pester her parents nonstop for seven dollars.
- Ⓒ Erin could buy the gift with a friend and split the cost.
- Ⓓ Erin could not go to her friend's party.

3. Tell two ways you could earn extra money.

Identifying Possible Solutions 8

Read the story and answer the questions.

Paige checked out a book from the library. She took it home and read it over a long, relaxing weekend. She finished the book before the due date and decided to return it early.

Paige couldn't find the book before she left for the library. She searched for over an hour. It had to be in the house. She didn't take the book anywhere else. Paige started to panic.



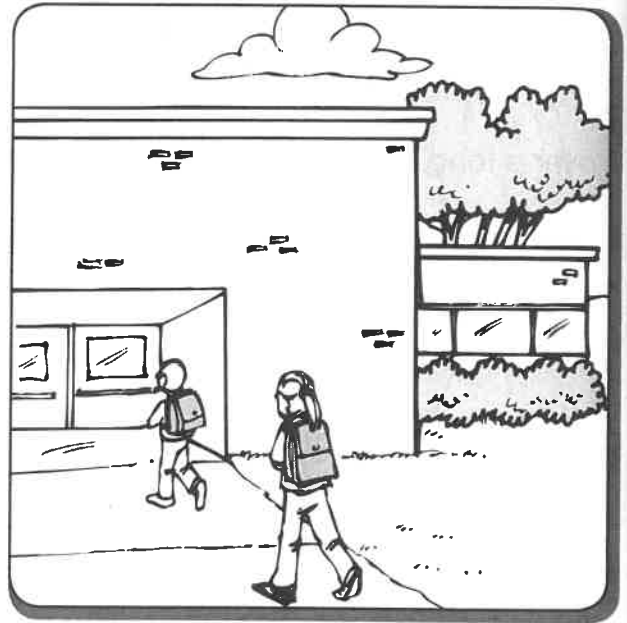
1. What was the problem?
 - (A) Paige couldn't find her library book.
 - (B) Paige wanted to return the book early.
 - (C) Paige thought someone took her library book.
2. Choose two good solutions.
 - (A) Paige could keep looking for the book since she has time before the due date.
 - (B) Paige could stop looking for the book and not return it.
 - (C) Paige could put an ad in the paper and post WANTED signs around town with a description of the book.
 - (D) Paige could ask her parents to help look for the book.
3. Tell about a time you lost something and then found it. What did you do to find it?

Identifying Possible Solutions 9

Read the story and answer the questions.

Monday morning was hectic at Gabe's house. Everyone woke up late. They rushed to get ready for school and work.

Gabe and his sister reached the bus stop just as the bus rolled up. As they walked into school, Gabe realized he had forgotten to bring a lunch. He didn't have a lunch card or any money.



1. What was the problem?

- (A) Gabe and his sister missed the bus.
- (B) Gabe doesn't have a lunch.
- (C) Gabe's sister doesn't have a lunch.

2. Choose two good solutions.

- (A) Gabe could skip lunch.
- (B) Gabe could ask to borrow money from a friend or someone in the school office.
- (C) Gabe could borrow a lunch card from a friend.
- (D) Gabe could eat his sister's lunch without asking.

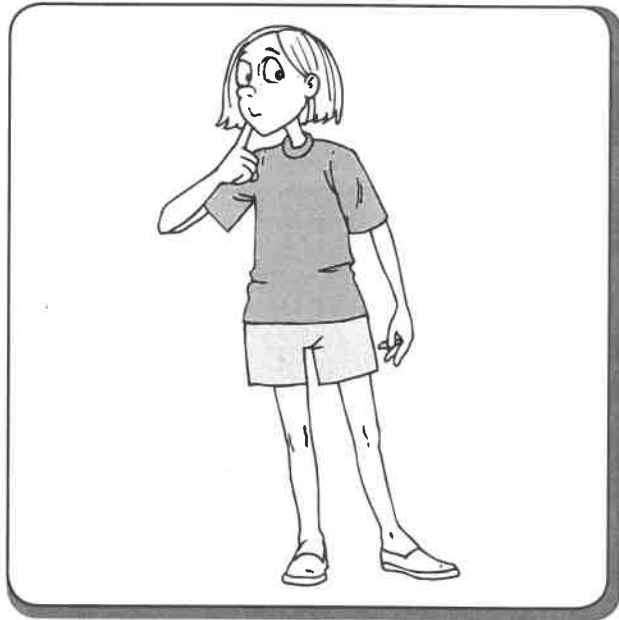
3. Tell about a time you forgot something important. How did you solve the problem?

Identifying Possible Solutions 10

Read the story and answer the questions.

Mae is in sixth grade. She wants to get a head start on her future. She isn't sure what she wants to do when she grows up, but she has some ideas. Deciding on a future career will help her know which courses to take to get the right training for her career.

Mae admires her aunt, who works as a nurse in an emergency room. Mae thinks it would be cool to help people who are sick or hurt. Mae also thinks she would like to follow her dad's career. He is a police officer.



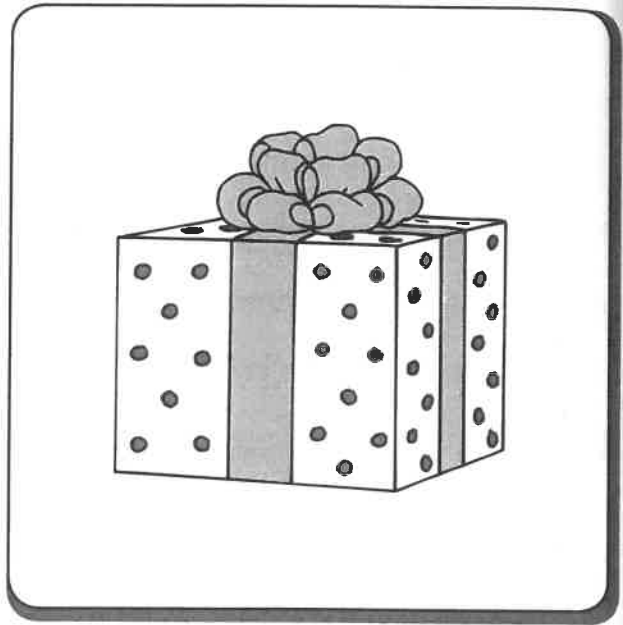
1. What is the problem?
 - (A) Mae isn't thinking about her future.
 - (B) Mae doesn't like to be around people who are sick or hurt.
 - (C) Mae doesn't know what she wants to be when she grows up.
2. Choose two good solutions.
 - (A) Mae could visit her aunt and her dad at work to see if she likes their jobs.
 - (B) Mae could ask a classmate what job she should choose.
 - (C) Mae could research the Internet and ask her aunt and her dad about their jobs.
 - (D) Mae could flip a coin and choose her future job.
3. Name two jobs you'd like to do when you grow up. What do you like about those jobs?

Identifying Possible Solutions 11

Read the story and answer the questions.

Max lives far away from Uncle Joe. They don't know each other very well. Uncle Joe knows that Max is a big sports fan, but he doesn't know Max's favorite sports. Max loves baseball and soccer, but he doesn't like football.

Uncle Joe sent Max a birthday gift. Max opens the gift and is disappointed that it is a football. "Bummer," thinks Max. "I could have used a new baseball mitt."



1. What is the problem?

- (A) Max loves baseball and soccer.
- (B) Uncle Joe lives far away.
- (C) Max doesn't like his gift.

2. Max needs to thank his uncle. Choose two good solutions.

- (A) Max could call Uncle Joe, thank him, and tell him he'd rather have a baseball mitt.
- (B) Max could send a note to Uncle Joe thanking him for the football.
- (C) Max could send a note to Uncle Joe saying he plans to throw the football away.
- (D) Max could call Uncle Joe and thank him for the football.

3. Tell about a gift you received from someone but didn't like. What did you do?

Identifying Possible Solutions 12

Read the story and answer the questions.

Sophie needs a jacket. She wants a stylish jacket like her friends wear. Sophie's parents can't afford the jacket Sophie wants. The next-door neighbor brings a jacket to Sophie. "My daughter wore this jacket one season," she says. "It doesn't fit her this year. Would you like it, Sophie?" Sophie likes the color of the jacket and it looks almost new, but she doesn't want to wear a hand-me-down.



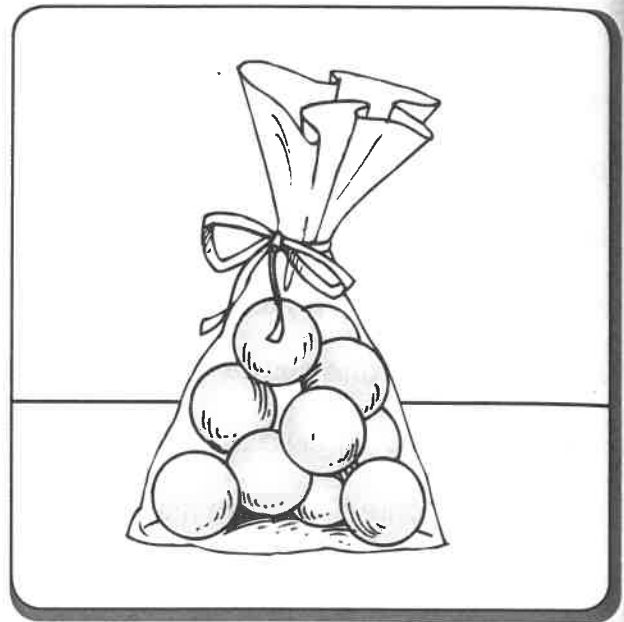
1. What is the problem?
 - (A) Sophie wants a brand new jacket.
 - (B) The jacket is damaged.
 - (C) Sophie doesn't like the color of the jacket.
2. Choose two good solutions.
 - (A) Sophie could accept the jacket and wear it until she finds one she likes and can afford.
 - (B) Sophie could tell her neighbor that she doesn't wear old clothes.
 - (C) Sophie could not say anything.
 - (D) Sophie could accept the jacket and be glad it saved her parents some money.
3. Tell about a time someone offered you something you didn't want. What did you do?

Identifying Possible Solutions 13

Read the story and answer the questions.

Cloe thinks all day about the bag of gumballs in her backpack. She plans to chew them on the way home from school. They are her favorite flavor.

After school, Cloe reaches into her backpack but cannot find the gumballs. She empties her backpack – no gumballs. Jackson, an older student, passes her on the sidewalk. He tosses something into his mouth. Cloe is almost certain it is a gumball. Then she sees him blow a huge bubble.



1. What is the problem?
 - (A) Jackson won't share the gumballs.
 - (B) Cloe thinks Jackson took her gumballs.
 - (C) Cloe can't blow good bubbles with her gumballs.
2. Choose three good solutions.
 - (A) Cloe could post signs around the school calling Jackson a thief.
 - (B) Cloe could tell Jackson that someone took her gumballs.
 - (C) Cloe could push Jackson down and take back her gumballs.
 - (D) Cloe could ask Jackson to give back her gumballs.
 - (E) Cloe could keep her gumballs at home so no one could take them.
3. What would you do if someone took something that belonged to you?

Identifying Possible Solutions 14

Read the story and answer the questions.

Brothers Carlos and Kurt share a bedroom. They have many of the same interests, but they have different tastes in music. Carlos plays the cello and loves classical music. Kurt is in a rock band and plays drums. When one of them plays his music in the room, the other one wants to turn down the volume.



1. What is the problem?

- (A) Carlos plays the cello and loves classical music.
- (B) Kurt likes rock music.
- (C) Carlos and Kurt don't like to listen to the same kind of music.

2. Choose two good solutions.

- (A) They could agree to wear headphones when they listen to music.
- (B) They could argue over whose music is better.
- (C) They could not play their music in their bedroom.
- (D) They could play both types of music loudly at the same time in the bedroom.

3. Tell about a time you disagreed with a friend or someone in your family. How did you solve the problem?