

# How Children Problem Solve

Children are natural problem solvers, eager to make sense of their world.

A child may

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- \* test the limits of his body and abilities. "How far can I reach?" "What happens when I push on that?"
- \* experiment with whatever he can touch, taste, smell, and hear.
- \* explore cause and effect, noticing what happens when he does something and using that information to decide whether or not to take that action again (dropping food off the high-chair tray for an adult to pick up).

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- \* create new and unexpected uses for toys and materials.
- \* experiment with the same problem over and over again, such as stacking blocks to build a tower that keeps falling down.
- \* test her physical problem-solving skills in such ways as climbing over chairs instead of going around them and sliding down the stairs on her bottom.

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- \* experiment with materials in slightly more creative and detailed ways than twos, such as using toy bananas as telephones or pots as hats.
- \* use language in the problem-solving process.
- \* try to make something work when he is having difficulty—for example, pounding in puzzle pieces where they don't fit.

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- \* construct elaborate ways to solve problems.
- \* begin to get very involved in solving social problems. Fours and fives are highly concerned about rules and helping others find solutions.
- \* enjoy experimenting and problem solving with ideas as well as concrete materials. Questions like "What will happen if ...?" and "What might happen next?" naturally arise as fours and fives begin to imagine new situations.

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- \* experiment with helping others work out a problem before she turns to an adult.
- \* be more likely to consider and discuss how possible solutions might work before trying them out.
- \* test the limits of her body with large-motor problem-solving activities—looking to see how far, how long, and how high she can move.