

Step 1: FIND OUT

The first step for students in solving a problem is to make sure they know what the problem is about and what they are being asked to find. Encourage them to try explaining the problem in their own words; this helps them better understand the information. They should ask themselves:

- What is happening in the problem?
- What do I have to find out to solve the problem?
- Are there any words or ideas I don't understand?
- What information can I use?
- Am I missing any information that I need?

Step 2: CHOOSE STRATEGIES

After students have identified what they are looking for and they know what information they have, they can make a plan for solving the problem. Now is the time to choose the strategy or combination of strategies that they think will be most helpful. They will find that there is often more than one way to solve the problem. In some cases, the problem may have to be broken down into smaller problems before the larger problem can be solved.