

## Problem-Solving Scenario Cards

Age-appropriate problem scenarios for practicing creative and logical thinking

Present these scenarios during car rides, dinner, or quiet time. Let your child struggle before helping -- the struggle IS the learning.

### Problem-Solving Framework (Teach This First)

- 1 Define: What exactly is the problem? Say it in one sentence.
- 2 Brainstorm: Come up with at least 3 possible solutions -- no judging yet.
- 3 Evaluate: What are the pros and cons of each? What could go wrong?
- 4 Try: Pick the best option and test it.
- 5 Reflect: Did it work? What would you do differently next time?

SCENARIO	AGE	SKILLS PRACTICED	DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
Your friend wants to play tag but you want to play hide-and-seek. What do you do?	3-5	Negotiation, compromise	How does your friend feel? Can you invent a game that combines both?
You built a block tower but it keeps falling over. How do you fix it?	3-5	Cause-and-effect, persistence	Why does it fall? What makes a strong base?
You're at the park and it starts raining. You don't have an umbrella. What do you do?	3-6	Resourcefulness, adaptability	What could you use for shelter? Is playing in rain always bad?
Your crayon broke in half. You need to finish your drawing. What now?	3-5	Flexible thinking, resourcefulness	Can you still use it? What else could you draw with?
Two classmates are arguing and both want you on their side. What do you do?	5-8	Conflict resolution, empathy	Do you have to pick a side? What does a mediator do?
You have \$5 and want to buy gifts for 3 family members. How?	5-8	Math, planning, creativity	What can you make instead of buy? How do you prioritize?
The class pet escaped its cage. How do you find and safely catch it?	5-9	Logical reasoning, teamwork	Where would it go? How do you think like a hamster?

SCENARIO	AGE	SKILLS PRACTICED	DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
You forgot your lunch at home. What are your options?	6-9	Self-advocacy, planning	Who can you ask for help? How do you prevent this next time?
Your team is building a bridge out of newspaper that has to hold a book. Design it.	7-10	Engineering thinking, collaboration	What shapes are strongest? How do you test before final build?
You notice a classmate sitting alone every day at lunch. What could you do?	7-11	Empathy, social courage	Why might they be alone? What would you want someone to do for you?
You have a school project due Friday. It's Wednesday and you haven't started. Make a plan.	8-12	Time management, prioritization	What are the steps? What's the minimum viable version? What do you cut?
Your neighborhood wants to build a new playground. Design it for kids of all abilities.	9-12	Inclusive design, systems thinking	What does 'accessible' mean? How do you gather input from different users?

Resist solving for them. When they say 'I don't know,' try: 'What's one thing you could try?'  
Silence after a question is thinking time -- don't fill it.