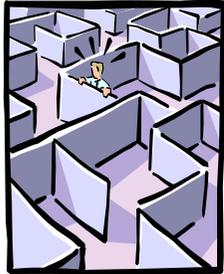




MAKING A START. Don't be scared of having a go! Draw some sketches, try some possible answers, talk the problem over with a friend.



CHECK YOUR ANSWERS. You might think you've got it but you'd better check, just in case. This is the vital and final (hopefully) part of solving a problem. And if it is not the final part, it is just as well you checked -isn't it? So always check your answers.



START WITH THE EASIER PARTS OF THE PROBLEM or MAKE THE PROBLEM SIMPLER. Understanding a simple version of a problem often is the first step to understanding a whole lot more of it. So don't be scared of looking at a simple version of a problem, then gradually extending your investigation to the more complicated parts.



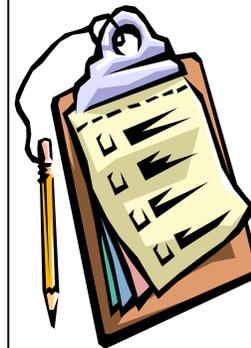
MAKE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEM. This may seem obvious but it is easy to jump straight into solving a problem before you really understand it. So, sure, have a bit of a play around with it at first, if you like, but then read the problem carefully two or three times if necessary. If you are still not sure about the problem try:
Talking it over with someone else; or
Writing out the problem in your own words and having someone else check that what you have written is the same as the original problem.



DO NOT GET FRUSTRATED. I know that is easy to say, but problem solving is all about coming up against something you don't quite understand. That is why it is a problem. So accept that fact and take it easy. If you worry about it too much you might lose concentration. So stay cool.



MAKE MISTAKES! It's true. Good problem solvers make plenty of mistakes. You may have heard the expression: learn from your mistakes. Well, this statement is true. Try things out, make mistakes, then try some other way of attacking the problem.



KEEP A RECORD. If you do not keep a record of what you have done (that is all your rough working & notes), you might end up repeating some of your earlier work without realizing it. This is particularly true if you are going to leave your problem for a while before coming back to it. Make sure you write down exactly where you are up to, so it will be easy to get back into at that later date. I know it seems like a real nuisance writing things down sometimes, but it is worth it if you save time and get closer to the problem's solution sooner.