

# INCREASING PROBLEM SOLVING ABILITY IN BUSINESS MATH

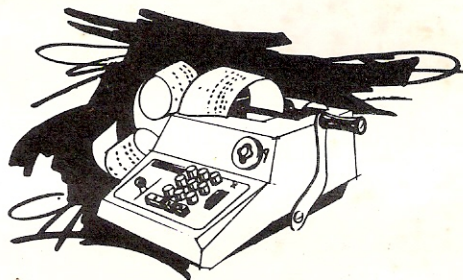
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There is a tendency to avoid non-associative, sterile activity in today's classroom. Consumer understanding and application should be goals of business arithmetic. The method of reaching these goals can be best realized through problem solving activities. There are various ways of teaching problem solving skills, some unique, that can be utilized to prepare students for consumer responsibilities. This author would like to offer different instructional strategies that could be considered.

One notion is to teach for social utility. The social utility concept establishes a frame of reference by which the daily experiences of a student is interwoven with mathematical functions. Introducing practical-real life problems also help to increase relevancy.

There is evidence of a lack of comprehension in the confronting of mathematical problems. There is a strong belief that students can read the problem, but they do not understand what they are reading. Because of this insufficiency, one can conclude that there should be reading-for-understanding activities.

Some educators recommend spelling and vocabulary lists, and using the dictionary along with mathematical concepts instead of primarily stressing mechanistic computation.

To teach the art of problem solving, instructors can utilize analysis and generalization techniques. For example, have the students identify significant terms used in the problem, what important information is given, extra and irrelevant data, what is asked for, and what has to be done to solve the problem.

Another instructional possibility may be referred to as the constructionist approach. It would be valuable to have students actually construct their own problems which may help bring the individual and the world of numbers closer together.

A unique method may be in programming the solution. In other words, without doing any computation, one enumerates the processes in order needed to solve the problem. For example, "To solve this problem, one first would add, then subtract, subtract again and complete by dividing."

Dramatization is a novel idea for problem solving. Make the teaching-learning process animated, such as having a student throw a coin up and down a number of times to demonstrate the theory of probability which can be used in an insurance unit.