The Six-Step Problem-Solving Process

1. **Recognize the problem**
2. **Gather data relative to the problem**
3. **List possible solutions to the problem**
4. **Test possible solutions to the problem**
5. **Select the best solution to the problem**
6. **Implement the problem-solution**

1. **Recognize the problem**
   - **An individual:** who is involved?
   - **An obstacle:** what is the problem?
   - **A goal:** what are you trying to achieve?

2. **Gather data relative to the problem**
   - **Facts:** truths to which your solution is based
   - **Criteria:** limits within which you solution must fall
   - **Assumptions:** statements that may or may not be true, but affect solution
   - **Definitions:** used to explain unknown words or terminology

3. **List possible solutions to the problem**
   1. **Barriers to Creativity**
      - **Habit:** reluctance to change from the old or accept new ways of doing things
      - **Fear:** fear of adopting new ways and discarding old ways
      - **Inertia:** resistance to change
      - **Prejudice:** negatively, the unfounded hatred of another idea; positively, too much pride in your own idea

   2. **Brainstorming**
      - **Quantity, Not Quality:** the more ideas, the greater the chance of finding viable solutions
      - **Hitchhike Ideas:** one idea rides in on another idea
      - **Withhold Judgment:** no evaluation, criticism (positive or negative), or judgment of any kind should be made before brainstorming is over
      - **Encourage Freewheeling:** once brainstorming is flowing, the leader should let the group brainstorm under its own steam with little or no guidance

4. **Test possible solutions to the problem**
   - At this point, put all the possible solutions to a test using criteria of the problem

5. **Select the best solution to the problem**
   - If in the previous step the solutions were tested and narrowed down to just one remaining solution, that that would be the best solution; if there is more than one left, choose the best solution by adding further criteria

6. **Implement the problem-solution**
   - Execute the solution that you have chosen as the best solution