

Fifty Ways to Work A Problem

**new lyrics by Lawrence Mark Lesser
may be sung to the tune of "Fifty Ways to Leave Your Lover,"
by Paul Simon
in *The Mathematics Teacher* May 2000**

Real-life problems are open-ended, typic'ly,
But we can solve them with some strategy.
With the tools and rules between you and me,
There must be fifty ways to work a problem.

We'll divide and conquer till we cut it down to size;
We'll make a model and visualize.
We'll use computers when it seems wise-
There must be fifty ways to work a problem!

Chorus:

Just say what's known, Joan,
and what's to find, Caroline.
What rings a bell, Nell,
to what we've done?
Make a plan, Stan, follow it through, Sue,
Try to extend, Ken, and we'll be done!

Sometimes the key is askin' what something means;
Sometimes analogies or an inductive scheme
-- Sometimes on our own, sometimes in a team,
There must be fifty ways to work a problem.
We'll explore the context, then try a guess-
If our first try won't fly, we won't get depressed,
We'll find a way that works,
there may not be one that's "best"
Of the fifty ways to work a problem!

(Repeat chorus twice)