Have you tried. . .

1 For starters

Have you tried. . .

. . . reading the title and the blurb?
. . . typing it into a search engine?
. . . pursuing even a train of thought that doesn’t seem to give a cogent answer at first?
. . . looking at the list of helpful websites?
. . . looking at the binder of useful stuff?

2 Letters and words

Have you tried. . .

. . . alphabetizing?
. . . using the leftover letters to spell something?
. . . rearranging the letters (aka “anagramming” or “transposing”)?
. . . looking for unusual letter frequencies?
. . . determining if it is a Rot 13/Caesar shift in general?
. . . shifting from letters to numbers?
. . . treating letters as protein sequences?
. . . treating letters as call letters?
. . . turning it into a cryptic crossword clue?
. . . seeing if these words relate to song lyrics?
. . . seeing if there are any acronyms of phrases?
. . . diagonalizing (taking the first letter of the first answer, the second letter of the second. . .)?
. . . looking at a computer keyboard?
. . . a pun?
3 Numbers

Have you tried...

...graphing it functionally?
...graphing it parametrically?
...checking to see if your numbers are in the right base (including hex)?
...shifting from numbers to letters?
...using it as a phone number?
...using it as an IP address?
...matching numbers to MIT buildings?
...matching numbers to MIT courses?
...treating numbers as dates?
...treating numbers as atomic weights, numbers, etc.?
...treating numbers as latitude/longitude or GPS coordinates?
...treating numbers as radio stations?
...treating numbers as ASCII numbers?
...treating numbers as PLU numbers?
...treating numbers as ISBN numbers?
...seeing if there are any strange sequences?
...seeing if prime numbers are involved?
...seeing if fundamental constants are involved?
...asking what other numbers are close to the one you have?

4 Thirteen ways of looking at a puzzle

Have you tried...

...looking at it in a mirror?
...squinting at it from far away?
...tilting it?
...looking at it upside down?
...looking through it?
...rewriting it neatly?
...rewriting it on graph paper?
...saying it out loud to someone else?
...putting yourself in the constructor’s shoes?
...making it 3D?
...cutting it up?
...folding it?
...connecting the dots?
5 What is it?

Have you tried...

...looking at a song/poem/book/movie/TV show?
...Braille?
...Morse code?
...overlaying it on a map of MIT?
...getting on the T?
...checking it for pop culture references with Tanis, Jenn, Denis or James?
...using the Library of Congress or Dewey decimal system?
...asking whether it has anything to do personally with the constructing team?
...Palm graffiti?
...running it by someone who goes to MIT?

6 Zen

Have you tried...

...trusting your instincts?
...trusting someone else’s instincts?
...asking “what’s weird about this?”
...taking a step back?
...asking for fresh brains?
...checking your work?
...asking someone else to check your work?
...explaining your work to someone else?
...doing what you’ve already done again to the output?
...consulting the list of expertise?
...leaving the room?
...asking people if it looks like anything they recognize?
...thinking about what’s missing?
...asking yourself whether you’ve used all the information?
...keeping even a strange-looking result?
...brute force?
...not thinking about it?
...splitting up tasks to solve in a group?
...talking to a hunt veteran?
...talking to a hunt newbie?
...asking “what’s the pattern”?
...rereading the instructions?