Make sure that you use the rock as much as possible because it yields the most results. Strategies that worked was when creating a new tool, test that new tool with every other tool or resource because that often created something new. In the end I spent a lot of time trying to create a stump because that is how you build the totem so use the tools and work with the different trees to try and build the stumps. The most confusing part was initially starting and trying to decide what to test first so don't hesitate, just simply go for it.

I would tell them to think carefully about the materials and re-read the directions. I would tell them to try different combinations with the sturdy materials and try to make new things out of the trees as well. I found that guessing with the berries did not work and filling out all four spaces also did not work. I found it difficult/confusing on how to actually build the pole and what to do once I ended up with certain resources.

To begin with, use your rocks. Rocks with rocks, rocks with those advanced rocks, advanced rocks with more advanced items and you'll get a lot of combinations. The berries, not much help. Use your rocks the most. It helps if you make doubles of items and then try combining those to make more new items. Find a pattern and stick to it.

The last item I discovered was the string, I am guessing that some combination of the string with either the wood poles or the block of larger wood will give you a block. A combination of the string with one of the types of arrowhead may give you a new tool but I doubt it as I think I tried most of them. Also I think the berries are used much later in the game as an item you can use to dye the blocks of wood to make more points from the totem pole. One last piece of advice would be to try multiple of a material to see if something is produced. An example would be to try two or three arrowheads together by them self and then adding another material or tool. When you go through a cold patch where you are not making any progress take stop clicking, take your hand off the mouse and take a deep breath. Then try to think of what real life combinations would yield objects you could use.

Keep the things already made in the stock pile and don't delete them because they could help you advance into other things!

Use common sense to think of combinations, but also throw things together you might not think work. I didn't expect some of the stuff to work and it did.

Once you have created two or more tools, try combining them to create even more stronger tools. When guessing, be aware that that you can use the same tool multiple times in one combination.

Keep putting items together. I found it helpful to use new items that I uncovered to create more and more items. Go off of the items you already made. I tried many combinations of two with my existing tools, and started trying groups of three and didn't find success. I got stuck at this point. Putting same items together often creates new tools. Think about what could go together to create a new tool rather than just testing out random combinations.

I suggest trying to follow tools all the way to their most "useful" form. Meaning, continue to mix the new tool until it looks like something you might actually use for your totem pole. You should try to keep track of what combinations you have already done. So far I have done nothing with the berries, so I would assume those will come into play later.

Use small tools to make bigger ones

I started out super slow because I had just randomly started putting the items in the workshop box hoping to find something that worked. A little ways in, I found that it would be more logical to think about a) how the items related to each other and b) how to rotate items in the workshop box so that I could keep track of what I had tried and approach the game more methodically. If I would have had more time, I would have paid more attention to what stayed when I was able to make a tool and what resource transformed into the new resource. Either way, don't get too flustered, just take a step back and think about the end goal (building the totem pole thingy) and what kind of big picture process might need to be done to get there. Also, don't start pressing keys, clicking random buttons, or checking if the computer is a touch screen - think within the game itself. Good luck!

Guess and check is the most important part. Use common sense when making guesses. Think about the real world and what can be made from natural resources. Always have the tools you unlock at your disposal in the stock area, and do not keep many or even any of the unlimited resources within the stock area. Do not get frustrated either, it will only be harder.