

# Using the Five Whys

## Background:

Five Whys is one of the simplest tools to use. Five Whys is the practice of asking “Why?” least five times in a row to determine the root cause of a problem. Application of the strategy involves taking any problem and asking “Why: what caused this problem?” By repeatedly asking the question “Why”, the layers of problem symptoms are peeled away and the root cause is identified. Although this technique is called the five whys, the question “Why?” may need to be asked more than five times.

## How to Use: (see template)

1. Write the specific problem where it can be seen by all group members.
2. Ask “Why?” the problem occurs. Write the response on chart paper.
3. Each time the question is answered, ask “Why?” again, each time recording the response on chart paper.
4. Continue the process for at least five rounds.
5. Write a hypothesis of the cause based on the final response to the last “Why?”

**Note:** *Ensure that all group members are involved and agree with the identified root cause.*

## Next Steps:

The determined cause is the target for planned improvement. Select the planning tool most appropriate for defining the improvement path for the identified cause.

Five Reasons Deep	
<b>Problem statement:</b>	Too many of our students are failing to achieve at the level we and state standards require.
<b>Q1.</b>	What is the main cause of or barrier keeping us from increase student achievement?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Response 1</li></ul>
<b>Q2:</b>	_____
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Response 2</li></ul>
<b>Q3:</b>	_____
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Response 3</li></ul>
<b>Q4:</b>	_____
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Response 4</li></ul>
<b>Q5:</b>	_____
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Response 5</li></ul>
<b>Hypothesis for solution to problem statement:</b>	_____