

The 5 Whys is a simple method of finding the root cause of a quality issue you are trying to improve.

Rules for the 5 Whys method:

- Be as specific and factual as possible with your answer to the first “Why?”
- Know when to stop. Keep asking “Why?” until the responses aren’t useful.
- If there is more than one reason for the problem, complete a separate 5 Whys for each reason.
- The root cause cannot be a person or unchangeable event. It must be a processor something that can be changed.
- Don’t stop at the fifth “Why?” if you haven’t found the root cause. Ask “Why?” as many times as you need to arrive at the root cause.

To do a 5 Whys analysis:

- Write down the problem you are trying to solve.
- Write down one reason you think this problem is happening. If there are multiple reasons, pick the one you think is the most important to start.
- Ask “Why?” until you find the root cause.

Use the diagram on the following page to complete a 5 Whys analysis.

Additional resource:

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. The 5 Whys and Fishbone Diagramming

<https://www.ahrq.gov/downloads/ncepcr/pf-modules/5-whys/story.html>

What is the problem?

Why is this happening?



Why is this happening?



Why is this happening?



Why is this happening?



Why is this happening?

