TRI PRINCIPLES INSTITUTE

5 Whys Worksheet

One sheet, one problem. Write the facts, not the first thing that comes to mind.

SESSION DATE _____ **LED BY** _____ **AREA / STATION** _____

PROBLEM (ONE FACT, NOT AN OPINION)

STEP	WHY	CHECKED AGAINST THE EVIDENCE?
Example	*Parts were waiting because the operator also does final inspection.*	*Yes, matches what we saw on the floor.*
Why 1		
Why 2		
Why 3		
Why 4		
Why 5		

One rule. This is about the process, not the person. If an answer names someone being slow, careless or untrained, that is a stop sign, not a root cause. Ask why the process depends on that person instead.

Tip. Stuck after two or three whys? Read the chain backward: does each answer really explain the one above it, or did the group agree too fast because it sounded right?

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5 Whys Pocket Guide

Keep it on your clipboard. Everything you need for a 15 to 20 minute session.

BEFORE YOU START

1. Write the problem as one fact two people would agree happened.
2. Get the person who does the work in the room, not only their manager.
3. Say the rule out loud: process, not person.
4. Write every answer down as you go.

HOW THE CHAIN WORKS

1. Ask "why" about the fact. Write the answer in one line.
2. Ask "why" about that answer. Keep the chain, don't restart it.
3. Check each answer against evidence, not memory.
4. Stop when you reach something the team can actually act on.
5. Five is a guide: some chains stop at three, others need seven.

SIGNS THE CHAIN WENT WRONG

SIGN	WHAT TO DO INSTEAD
Stopped at "someone was careless"	Ask why the process lets one person's pace decide the outcome.
Branched into two problems	Pick one branch, finish it, run the other as a second pass.
Landed on "the economy" or "people make mistakes"	Back up one step to the last answer the team can change.
No one checked the answers	Go back to the bench or the data before the next session.

AFTER THE SESSION

1. Write the action with an owner and a date.
2. Put it on the daily board.
3. Set a date, 2 to 4 weeks out, to check if it worked.
4. If it didn't, pick up from the last "why" instead of starting over.

GOOD VS. VAGUE

Vague: "We're always behind on Fridays."

Good: "Nine trays were waiting at the deburr bench at 10:40 on Tuesday."