



# The Five Whys Protocol Template

(Root Cause Analysis)

## Why #1 — Immediate Explanations

Surface **initial hypotheses** closest to the data.

### Guiding Questions:

- *Why might this be happening?*
- *What could be contributing to this pattern?*

### Focus on:

- Behaviors
- Conditions
- Experiences visible in the data

## Why #2 — Skills, Supports, or Opportunities

Move beyond symptoms to **learning opportunities or supports**.

### Guiding Questions:

- *Why might those behaviors or conditions exist?*
- *What might be influencing these experiences?*

### Focus on:

- Preparation
- Access to practice
- Feedback or coaching
- Resources

## Why #3 — Structures & Systems

Shift to **programmatic or organizational factors**.

### Guiding Questions:

- *Why might these supports or opportunities vary?*



- *How are structures or processes shaping this pattern?*

**Focus on:**

- Program design
- Policies or expectations
- Roles and responsibilities
- Consistency across contexts

## Why #4 — Assumptions & Design Choices

Interrogate **implicit assumptions** and historical decisions.

**Guiding Questions:**

- *Why are these structures set up this way?*
- *What assumptions may be influencing this design?*

**Focus on:**

- Tradition vs intention
- Alignment (or misalignment)
- Whose perspectives shaped decisions

## Why #5 — Root Conditions (Actionable)

Land on **conditions you can influence**.

**Guiding Questions:**

- *What system-level condition may be contributing to this pattern?*
- *What is within our sphere of influence?*

**Outcome:**

- A clearer understanding of *what to examine or change*
- Not yet a solution — just clarity



**BranchED**