**The Five W’s and One H Method For Decision Making**

**5W1H** represents a list of fundamental questions, What? Why? Who? Where? When? and How?, whose answers are considered basic in information-gathering, analysis, problem-solving, communication and decision making.

They are often mentioned in journalism, police investigations, brain-storming exercises and research projects as they constitute a formula for providing a complete overview of an idea, subject or topic you want to understand.

**The Kipling Method: Six Honest Serving-men**

The Five W’s and one H were memorialized by [Rudyard Kipling](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudyard_Kipling) in his "[Just So Stories](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Just_So_Stories)" in which a poem accompanying the tale of "The Elephant's Child" opens with:

*I keep six honest serving-men*  
*They taught me all I knew;*  
*Their names are What and Why and When*  
*And How and Where and Who.*

According to the Five W’s and 1 H Method, or Kipling Method, these six interrogative pronouns are the source of all questions and if you answer the significant questions that can be derived from these pronouns, your analysis will be more complete and you will formulate better solutions and decisions.

The six questions can serve as the basis for Information Gathering and Problem Solving, for Decision Making and Communication, and for Opportunity Analysis.

**Information Gathering and Problem Solving:**

* **What** happened?
* **Who** was involved?
* **When** did it take place?
* **Where** did it take place?
* **Why** did it happen?
* **How** did it happen?

**Decision Making and Communication:**

* **What** is to be done? **Why** this? **What** else could be done?
* **Who** will do it? **Why** them? **Who** else could do it?
* **When** will it be done? **Why** then? **When** else could it be done?
* **Where** will it be done? **Why** there? **Where** else could it be done?
* **Why** will it be done? **What** is our purpose?
* **How** will it be done? **Why** will it be done this way? **How** else could it be done?

**Opportunity Analysis:**

**Step One:** Write down the six basic questions in one column to structure your analysis of a given opportunity.

**Step Two:** Develop as many questions as possible related to the opportunity that start with each of the six pronouns. Write down all the questions in random order that come to mind, using the six pronouns to stimulate your thinking. Avoid the temptation to evaluate or answer the questions at this point.

**Step Three:** Organize your questions into a framework and start answering the questions.

Click **here** for an example of how to use this three step exercise in analyzing the opportunity to offer an additional Sunday morning worship service.

The significance of using the Five W’s and 1 H Method is that none of the questions can be answered with a simple yes or no. Each question provides a factual answer — facts necessary for a report, analysis or decision to be considered thorough and complete.