**The 5 Steps to Data Collection**

**Step 1: Clarify your data collection goals**

This sounds straight forward enough, but it is often overlooked.  For example, **what problem are you trying to solve**by collecting this data?  Be sure to be clear about your purpose for data collection.

**Step 2: Develop operational definitions and procedures**

What are we measuring? How will it be measured? Who will measure it? Having clarity in these questions is of utmost importance. Often times we will employ [sampling](https://www.gembaacademy.com/school-of-six-sigma/inferential-statistics/inferential-statistics-overview-and-sampling) in which case we need to define a sampling plan.

**Step 3: Validate the measurement system**

Confirm your measurement system by doing a test run before the actual data collection stragegy is implemented. Try to insure that all persons collecting data are following the same measurement system.

**Step 4: Begin data collection**

Using all the knowledge from the previous steps, we now go off and collect our data.

**Step 5: Continue improving measurement system and ensure people are following the data collection guidelines**

Measurement systems need to be verified often.  Also, as with anything related to continuous improvement, sustaining a process is the hardest part.  Data collection is no different.