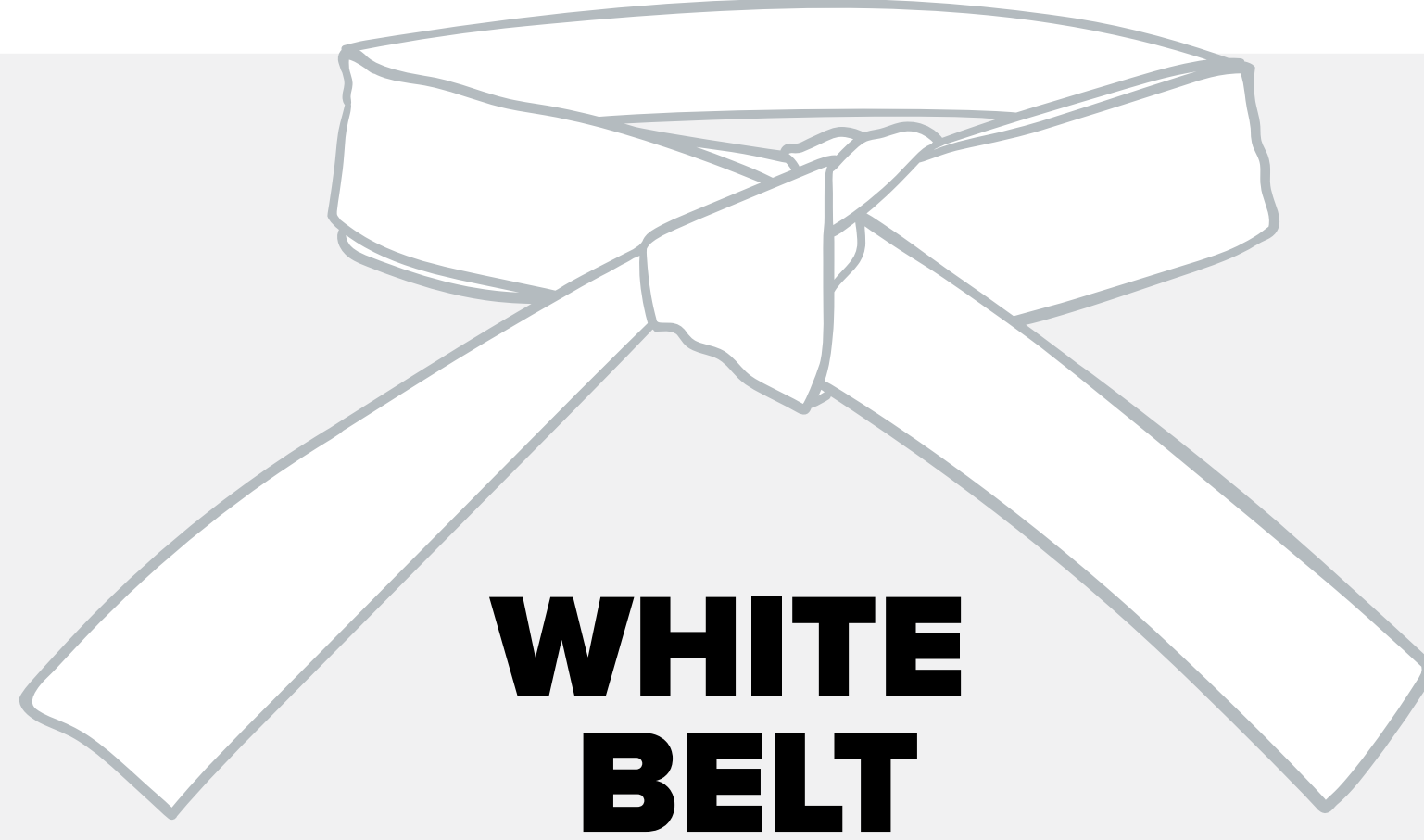




The 5 Six Sigma Belts

Tools and methods may get all the attention, but the professionals, their Six Sigma belt levels, and the certification they hold often determine project success. **BY CATHY CECERE**

Professionals who follow Lean Six Sigma use the data-driven methodology to improve processes by eliminating defects, variations, and waste. They embrace the disciplined, data-driven approach using problem-solving tools, statistical methods, and advanced analytics. The Six Sigma belt levels and certifications are similar to those of martial arts. Globally recognized, they are awarded to practitioners based on their level of skill, experience, knowledge, and training in Lean Six Sigma principles. Here are the basic roles and responsibilities of each belt level.



WHITE BELT

- **Entry level of certification.**
- **Training provides basic working knowledge of the Six Sigma language and methodology.**
- **White Belts help the team collect data and encourage the adoption of Six Sigma principles.**



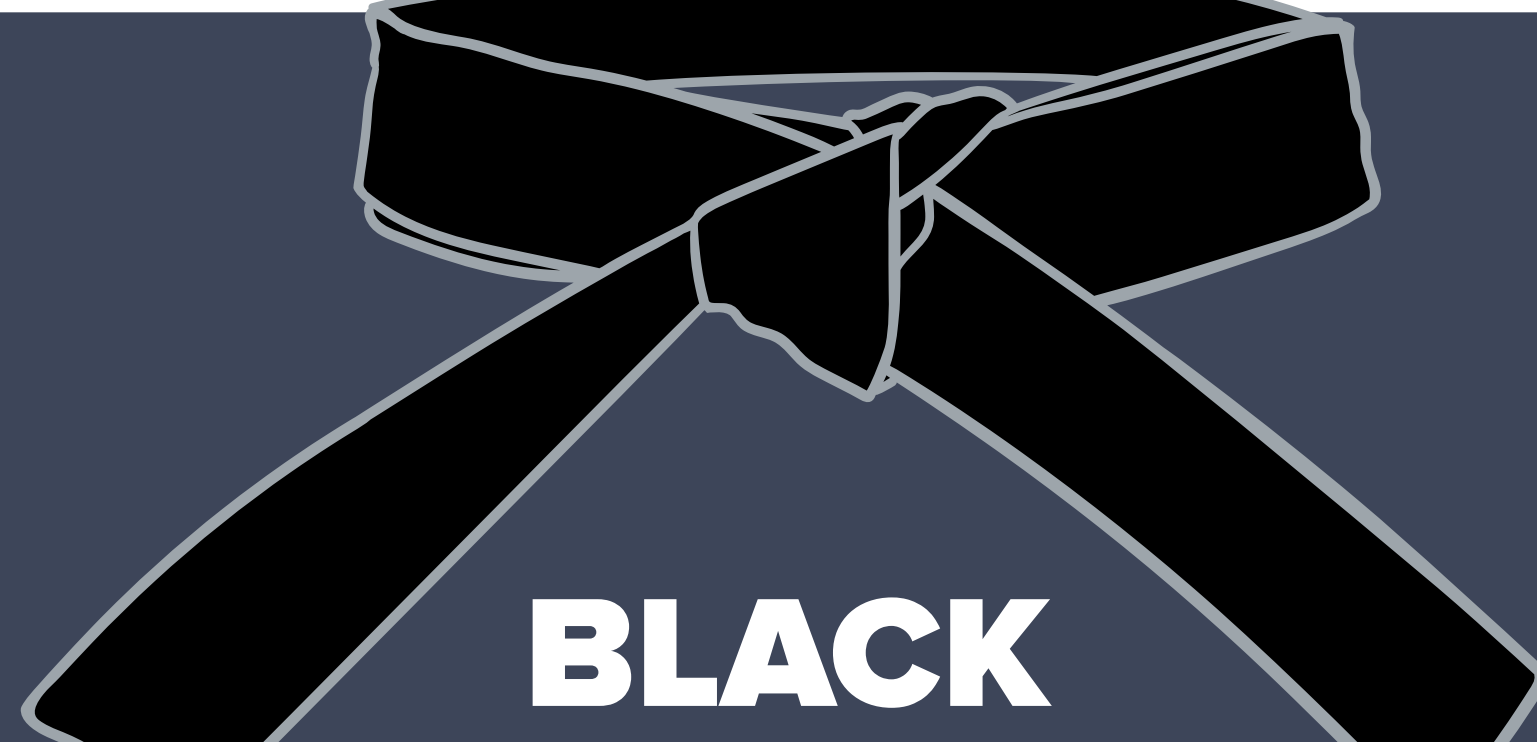
YELLOW BELT

- **One step above White Belt.**
- **Yellow Belts understand Six Sigma principles and terminology.**
- **On a project, Yellow Belts are co-facilitators and often work under a project leader who is Green or Black Belt certified. Tasks such as process mapping and data gathering are appropriate at this level.**



GREEN BELT

- **Green Belts are the work horse of the belts, with most project teams led by Green Belt experts.**
- **Green Belts typically spend up to 50 percent of their working time identifying and implementing organizational improvements.**
- **With a strong working knowledge of Six Sigma tools, techniques, and best practices, they are experts in process improvement.**



BLACK BELT

- **Black Belts hold a mastery of process improvement and statistical analysis.**
- **Black Belts practice Six Sigma full time and serve as project team leaders. They also manage multiple teams (keeping them on task and meeting deadlines) and mentor those who hold Green, Yellow, and White Belts.**
- **They are able to teach Six Sigma principles in an organization.**



MASTER BLACK BELT

- **The highest of the Six Sigma belts and certifications.**
- **Master Black Belts have completed extensive training and testing and mastery of Six Sigma concepts and practices.**
- **They manage Six Sigma full-time and act as a consultant—able to answer process and organization-specific questions.**
- **Coach and mentor to Black and Green Belts, they communicate with senior executives and work to achieve organizational quality improvement and other Six Sigma efforts.**