

Practical ways to delegate

You can structure your approach to delegation across four steps.

1. Choose what to delegate	
Routine tasks	For example, recurring tasks that are relatively easy to teach to another member of staff and will immediately free up your time.
Tasks that will develop a staff member in their role	For example, learning how to undertake tasks in positions they may ultimately progress into.
2. Choose who to delegate to	
Tasks that are a natural 'fit' for a member of staff based on their skills and strengths	Review people's skills – including considering what they do outside of the workplace and what extra work they could undertake.
Avoid constantly delegating to the same person	Beware of continually delegating to the same person, because they're reliable. This deprives other staff of the opportunity to develop and puts unfair pressure onto one person.
3. Discuss the delegated task(s) at hand	
Describe the task	Tell the person about the task and why you think that they're the ideal person to undertake it. Focus on the person's strengths and skills and how they would be utilised in the task.
Check that the person is happy to take on the new task	Ask what the person's initial feelings are about taking responsibility for the task. It's essential that the member of staff willingly takes the delegated task.
Give them time	The person may wish to give it some thought. Offer them a short time to do this. The task may involve additional time spent at work, so they may wish to speak with their partner or consider childcare arrangements. Reiterate your reasons for wanting to delegate this task to them, highlight their strengths and build their confidence.
Review existing workload	If the person is concerned about adding to their current workload, suggest that you look at it together and, if necessary, delegate part of their work. Going through the delegation process with staff has the added advantage of them learning how to delegate effectively themselves.
Decide to proceed with delegation... or not	If the person is adamant that they don't want to accept the delegated work, it's better to find someone else.
Show your appreciation	When the person agrees to take on the delegated task, thank them and reiterate the benefits to them.

4. Assign the work

Confirm understanding	<p>Check that the person fully understands what's required. If you're delegating a recurring task, the best way to do this is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ tell them how to do it■ show them how to do it■ provide a written procedure of how to do it■ observe them while they demonstrate how to do it■ correct or praise them■ don't allow them to do it independently until you're confident that they can undertake it correctly.
Assign the work	<p>If it's a recurring task, ensure that the person knows when it will begin. If it's a project, ensure that the person is given SMART objectives and understands the deadlines for completion.</p>
Check if further training is required	<p>If the task is more complex, ensure that they receive appropriate training and coaching to enable them to build their skills and enjoy a successful outcome. Being stretched is good, but too much stretch becomes stress, which isn't good.</p>
Confirm commitment	<p>Delegate authority with responsibility and ensure that the person knows who will support them if they have difficulties or are unsure of what to do.</p>
Provide support and build in checkpoints	<p>Agree when you will meet again and undertake spot checks to ensure that the task is being carried out correctly.</p>
Final review	<p>When the task is complete, ask the person to reflect on what went well, what they could have done better and what they have learned from the experience. Thank them for their work.</p>