

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



**How to Succeed With Volunteers-In-Parks**  
60-Minute Module Series

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# DELEGATION Training Guide

**National Park Service**  
**Volunteers-In-Parks Program**



# HOW TO SUCCEED WITH VOLUNTEERS-IN-PARKS

## 60-Minute Module Series

Program Preparation  
Program Planning  
Motivation  
Needs Assessment  
Designing Jobs  
Recruitment  
Interviewing  
Orientation  
Training  
Safety Management  
Supervision  
Delegation  
Performance Reviews  
Recognition

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# INTRODUCTION

National Park Service employees need and want to produce results that are often beyond their individual capacities and time availability. Through delegation, they are able to work with skilled volunteers to expand their ability to accomplish important work.

Delegation offers the opportunity to help accomplish the mission and goals of the park through the efforts of volunteers. It is the volunteer supervisor's most important and basic tool. But, as all who are engaged in responsible delegation know, it is complicated, requires hard work, and involves unavoidable risks.

In many ways, delegation is the art of letting go while staying in charge. It involves giving volunteers the needed tools and support to do a job, clear responsibility and authority for decision making, and just enough controls to assure ourselves that the agreed-upon results are being accomplished. Not an easy task!

Good delegation frees paid staff to do other work while empowering volunteers to grow on the job. A park which is reluctant to release significant work to volunteers or is dissatisfied with volunteers' reliability and/or accomplishments may find that the core of the problem lies with difficulties inherent in delegation.

# PURPOSE AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The **Purposes** of this module are to explore the values of delegation, to enhance understanding of responsible delegation, and to identify the procedures and techniques for doing it well.

## Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to:

1. Identify any personal resistance to delegation.
2. Appraise the value of responsible delegation.
3. Explain the differences between doing, directing, dumping and delegating.
4. Name the procedures and technical skills involved in delegation.
5. Propose appropriate levels of authority when delegating.

# GENERAL NOTES TO TRAINER

1. This workshop is in a suggested format. Feel free, however, to personalize it with your own stories. Also, phrase questions and activities in a manner most attuned to your participants.
2. This training should give participants useful skills in delegation that are transferable to any work or home setting.
3. This is a core skill that will be useful for anyone who supervises paid or non-paid personnel and may, therefore, be a module to include early in a volunteer management training series.
4. If possible, involve other staff or leadership volunteers in the delivery of this module. Information is frequently best received when presented by a peer.
5. Because there are four key concepts to cover, presentations and facilitation must be crisp and timed.

# WORKSHOP OUTLINE

Transparency Handout	Section	Method of Presentation	Time
T-1 T-2 T-3	H-1 <b>Introduction</b> Opening Exercise Introductory Comments Learning Objectives Key Concepts	Activity/Presentation	10 minutes
T-3 T-4 T-5 T-6 T-7	H-1 H-2 <b>Concept 1</b> Three reasons for difficulty in delegation	Interactive Presentation	15 minutes
T-3 T-8	H-1 <b>Concept 2</b> Benefits of delegation	Discussion	5 minutes
T-3 T-9	H-1 H-2 <b>Concept 3</b> Cardinal rules of delegation	Interactive Presentation	10 minutes
T-3 T-10	H-1 H-3 <b>Concept 4</b> Levels of authority in delegation	Interactive Presentation	15 minutes
T-3	H-1 <b>Summary/Wrap-Up/Evaluation</b>	Summary Remarks	5 minutes

**TOTAL TIME: 60 minutes**

# TRAINER'S NOTES

## INTRODUCTION

Time: 10 minutes

### T-1: How Good Are You at Delegating?

#### Quick Opening Exercise [optional]

Ask all participants to share with another workshop participant how they perceive their success at delegation to others. [The descriptive word must begin with an "M" such as magnificent, mixed, miserable, murky, others...]

#### Debrief:

Ask by a show of hands how many rated themselves as magnificent, mixed, etc., and ask for any new "M" words that surfaced.

#### Summary of Learning:

Most people are, at best, mixed in their self evaluation of success with delegation. Note that it is a difficult skill that involves hard work, patience, and unavoidable risks.

### T-2: Learning Objectives

Share T-2: Learning Objectives with participants.

### T-3: Key Concepts

This training is built on four Key Concepts.

### H-1: Key Concepts

[Show transparency with all concepts on it. Indicate that during the workshop each concept will be examined, together with relevant material.]

## CONCEPT 1

Time: 15 minutes

Many difficulties in delegation arise from attitudes toward releasing work, not understanding what delegation is, and lack of organizational rewards for effective delegation.

### T-3: Key Concepts

### H-1: Key Concepts

### T-4: Why Delegation is Difficult

### T-5: Good Managers Delegate

### T-6: Getting the Job Done

#### Three Presentation Points:

**Point #1.** Although we like others to delegate to us, many of us have some resistance to delegating to others.

**Ask group to answer:** Why do people have difficulty delegating?

[Record answers on flip chart/transparency — optional]

Suggest these as possible reasons if the group does not suggest them.

“I can do it better.”

“I enjoy it and don’t want to give it up.”

“I have no time to delegate.”

“People will wonder what I do...”

“The volunteer may do it better than I do.”

“I am responsible for the end results and don’t want to lose control by ‘farming’ it out.”

“I am a perfectionist and have had poor past experience with delegation.”

Others...

#### Key Learning:

If we continue to allow these attitudes to affect our willingness to delegate, we will never become good managers. **GOOD MANAGERS** don’t directly do things; they work through others (delegate) to get the job done.

**Point #2.** There is much misunderstanding regarding what delegation is.

There are four ways to get a job done:

Doing it all

Directing others (when, how, etc.)

Dumping (indiscriminate, poor timing)

Delegating (mutual results, authority/support inspection system)

## T-7: Delegation

## H-2: Delegation

[Show T -7: Delegation, which breaks down the definition of delegation. Participants should begin to see the complexity of this skill. Assure them you will explore in detail these elements, which are essential to good delegation, a bit later.]

### **Key Learning:**

Your past experience with delegation may not have included an understanding of all the elements involved.

**Point #3.** If delegation is not rewarded in a park, people tend to want to **do** it all!

[Optional discussion, if pertinent to your participants:  
Who tends to get rewarded in your park - people who are the doers or people who delegate?]

## CONCEPT 2

Time: 5 minutes

It is important to understand and appreciate the potential benefits of delegation for you, for the volunteer and for the park.

**T-3: Key Concepts**

**H-1: Key Concepts**

**T-8: Benefits of Delegation**

**Ask group:**

What are the benefits for you, the park and volunteers when you delegate?

Facilitate and/or record answers.

Possible answers:

- Release time for you to do other things.
- The organization saves money, can do more, and involves more people in the mission.
- This is the way we “grow” people.
- Others . . .

(You might ask participants to imagine where they would be today if no one had taken the risk to delegate to them.)

## CONCEPT 3

Time: 10 minutes

Understanding and practicing the cardinal rules of effective delegation will enhance your chance for success.

### T-3: Key Concepts

### H-1: Key Concepts

### T-9: Cardinal Rules of Delegation

### H-2: Cardinal Rules of Delegation.

As you discuss each cardinal rule, ask participants for examples.

**There are Nine Cardinal Rules of Effective Delegation:**

**1. Match work requirements with the corresponding abilities and time availability of the volunteer.**

[In other words, do you have the right person for the assignment, not simply someone who has agreed to do it? Does he/she have the time and is he/she willing to give the time needed to get the job done?]

**2. Give the assignment in terms of results.**

Don't just give activities for volunteers to follow; share with them what is to be accomplished.

**3. Define the level of authority.**

Indicate how much authority the volunteer has to make decisions without "checking - in."

[Note this is a critical part of success which will be dealt with further in Concept #4.]

**4. Clearly communicate any guidelines and assess the volunteer's understanding of them.**

Volunteers should be forewarned about any constraints that must shape their decisions or activities (e.g., confidentiality).

**5. Make resources and training available.**

It is important that volunteers have the assistance and resources needed to successfully accomplish their tasks. Ask volunteers what you can do to help assure their success.

## **T-9: Cardinal Rules of Delegation**

## **H-2: Cardinal Rules of Delegation.**

### **6. Determine criteria for success.**

It is important that the supervisor and the volunteer reach an agreement on how results will be measured (e.g., results of a recruitment outreach: recruit and train six new volunteer trail workers by June 1, etc.).

### **7. Set up checkpoints.**

To be certain that the job is progressing. Times should be established to check on progress or on any need for change or additional support.

### **8. Provide feedback and recognition along the way and at the completion of a project.**

### **9. Watch out for REVERSE DELEGATION.**

Ask participants what reverse delegation is. If they are unsure, give them an example: When you delegate a job to a volunteer and he/she brings problems back to you to solve! Try to problem solve with them, but let them keep the job. [Most people can share experiences with this behavior.]

## CONCEPT 4:

Time: 12 minutes

Deciding on the proper level of authority to release is a critical element of delegation.

### T-3: Key Concepts

### H-1: Key Concepts

### T-10: Levels of Authority in Delegation

### H-3: Levels of Authority in Delegation

#### Presentation:

Most problems in delegation lie in either over controlling (watching over the shoulder) or under controlling (“Here it is ... Good luck!”) The important thing to know is what level of authority the volunteer needs to have in the task given to him/her. There are essentially four major levels to choose from:

[Read all levels on T -10, then start descriptions and illustrations from Level #4 moving up to Level #1.]

#### Level #4 - No authority for self- assignment

This is really not delegation. The volunteer would not be permitted to make any decisions on the project. Only the very immature or unqualified would fit in this category. You don't want to put people into jobs for which they have no qualifications or motivation to succeed.

#### Level #3 - The authority to recommend self- assignment

Volunteers have the authority to recommend self- assignment — the lowest level of authority. They must bring suggestions to you for your approval before they can move ahead.

#### Ask the participants:

Under what circumstances would this level of delegation be quite appropriate? Possible answers:

1. New volunteers for whom you have no record of reliability or ability. (If they prove to have good ideas, move them quickly to level #2.)
2. Volunteers who are inexperienced in this activity. They might function at level #2 or even #1 in other activities. [Example: Volunteers whom you would like to train as volunteer recruiters. They are inexperienced at this so you would ask them to give you an outline of their talk and, if inexperienced at public speaking, they would benefit from an opportunity to rehearse.]

## **T-10: Levels of Authority in Delegation**

## **H-3: Levels of Authority in Delegation**

### **Level #2 - The authority for self- assignment provided regular progress reports are received**

This authority is given to a volunteer who has proved him/herself capable in this area. You trust his/her judgment to make decisions without always coming to you for approval. You do ask for a report indicating actions they have taken so that you maintain control. If the person repeatedly makes poor decisions, return them to level #2 in delegation.

### **Level #1 - The authority for self- assignment**

This, the highest level of delegation, is where you have full trust in a person's competence and commitment to a task or job. You ask for contact with the volunteer only if he/she has a problem or feels you need to be apprised of the situation.

A great example to help people understand these levels of delegation is to discuss a parent's supervision of a teenager as the parent gradually "lets go."

**Level 4** - "You will be home at midnight."  
No discussion.

**Level 3** - "What time do you think is reasonable for you to be home?"

**Level 2** - "Wake me up to let me know you got home safely."

**Level 1** - NEXT DAY - "So.... how's it going?"

## SUMMARY/WRAP-UP/EVALUATION

Time: 5 minutes

### T-3: Key Concept

Review definition of delegation. Delegation can be challenging, often complicated, and involves taking a risk.

### H-1: Key Concepts

**BUT REMEMBER:** If you follow the principles of effective delegation, the benefits for you, the park, the volunteers, and the visiting public can make the effort well worthwhile.

**END 60-MINUTE TRAINING**

# SUGGESTIONS FOR EXPANDED ACTIVITIES

1. Have participants think about what parts of their current job they could delegate to a volunteer. (A good follow-up workshop would be job design, in which you teach staff and volunteers to write new job descriptions based on the release of some of their current tasks.)
2. After the presentation on levels of authority (Concept #4), have participants think about a situation where they put someone in the wrong level of authority (too high or too low) and had difficulties supervising the person.
3. If a new manager enters the park, there will likely be problems with levels of authority in delegation, particularly if people have progressed to a trusted level with the former manager. When a new manager enters, staff are often placed in a lower authority level while the manager assesses their working style and develops some trust in their relationship. (This may be an appropriate topic to add if your organization has recently undergone personnel changes at the management level.)
4. In groups of three, ask participants to role play a meeting where an assignment is given to the volunteer. Have one person take the role of a staff person who is delegating a job to a volunteer. The third person is the observer who will give feedback as to the delegator's effectiveness in releasing the job. Use examples relevant to your organization regarding the position. (See Concept #3 to review elements.)
5. Ask participants to think of a person who has significantly and effectively delegated to them. Ask them to remember the qualities of the person and why they regard them as a superb delegator. (Remembering people who took the risk to trust you will help you become better able to "let go.")
6. A good closing exercise is to ask participants to get into pairs and answer the question: "As a result of our discussion on delegation, what will I begin to do differently to enhance my skills in this area?"

# RESOURCES

1. Lynch, Richard. *Precision Management*. Order: Heritage Arts Publishing, 1807 Prairie, Downers Grove, Illinois 60515.
2. Wilson, Marlene. *How to Delegate to Today's Volunteers* (video). Volunteer Management Associates, (303) 447-0558, [www.volunteermanagement.com](http://www.volunteermanagement.com)

## Other resources that may be available

3. Jenks, James and John Kelly. *Don't Do, Delegate*, Ballantine Books, New York, 1985.
4. McCurley, Steve and Richard Lynch. *Volunteer Management: Mobilizing all the Resources of the Community*, Heritage Arts Publishing, 1996. Available from [www.energizeinc.com](http://www.energizeinc.com)

# **T** RANSPARENCIES

# Guide to Transparencies

- T-1:** How Good Are You at Delegating?
- T-2:** Learning Objectives
- T-3:** Key Concepts
- T-4:** Why Is Delegation Difficult?
- T-5:** Good Managers Delegate
- T-6:** Getting the Job Done
- T-7:** Delegation
- T-8:** Benefits of Delegation
- T-9:** Cardinal Rules of Delegation
- T-10:** Levels of Authority in Delegation

# How Good Are You at Delegating?

# Learning Objectives

- Discuss any attitudinal resistance to delegation
- Appraise values of responsible delegation
- Explain differences between doing, directing, dumping, and delegating
- Name procedures and skills involved in delegation
- Propose appropriate levels of authority when delegating

# Key Concepts

## Concept 1

Many difficulties in delegation relate to attitudes, understanding, and organizational rewards.

## Concept 2

It is important to understand the benefits of delegation.

## Concept 3

Following the cardinal rules of delegation will help you succeed.

## Concept 4

Deciding on the proper level of authority to release is a critical element of delegation.

**Why  
Is  
Delegation  
Difficult?**

# Good Managers Delegate

# Getting the Job Done

- Doing
- Directing
- Dumping
- Delegating

# Delegation

- Mutually agreed-upon results
- An appropriate levels of authority
- Needed support and training
- A follow-up system which allows you to inspect what you expect

# **What Are the Benefits of Delegation?**

# Cardinal Rules of Delegation

1. Assess the work requirements and the corresponding abilities/time availability of the volunteer
2. Give assignment in terms of desired results, not activities
3. Define the level of authority for the job
4. Clearly communicate any guidelines and assess the volunteer's understanding of them
5. Make resources and training available

# Cardinal Rules of Delegation (continued)

6. Determine criteria for success  
(i.e., how results will be measured)
7. Set up checkpoints, deadlines and systems for reporting
8. Provide feedback and recognition
9. Watch out for reverse delegation!

# Levels of Authority in Delegation

## Level 4

No authority for self- assignment

## Level 3

The authority to recommend  
self- assignment

## Level 2

The authority for self- assignment  
provided regular progress reports  
are received

## Level 1

The authority for self- assignment



# HANDOUTS

# Guide to Handouts

- H-1:** Key Concepts of Delegation
- H-2:** Delegation - Definition and Cardinal Rules
- H-3:** Levels of Authority in Delegation

# Key Concepts of Delegation

**The purpose of delegation is to increase productivity by assigning responsibility and authority to volunteers to accomplish mutually agreed-upon tasks.**

## Concept 1

**Many difficulties in delegation arise from attitudes toward releasing work, not understanding what delegation is, and lack of organizational rewards for effective delegation.**

We may resist delegation for reasons such as we feel we can do the job better; or, we enjoy it too much to give it up; or, we feel we don't have time to delegate; or, we are afraid the person we delegate to will do a better job than we do. We must understand that delegation relies on assigning mutually agreed-upon results, an appropriate level of authority and support to get those results, and a follow-up system that allows us to check those results. If the organization tends to reward people who **do** the most, as opposed to those who **get the most done**, effective delegation may not be regarded as valuable.

## Concept 2

**It is important to understand and appreciate the potential benefits of delegation for you, for the volunteer, and for the park.**

Delegation can release time for you to do other things; result in more work being accomplished; help volunteers to learn and grow; save money; and involve more people in the NPS mission.

## Concept 3

**Understanding and practicing the cardinal rules of delegation will enhance your chance for success.**

It is important to match the work requirements and the volunteer's ability, give assignments in terms of results, define the level of authority, communicate guidelines and the volunteer's understanding of them, provide training and other resources, define the criteria for success, set up checkpoints, provide feedback and recognition, and avoid reverse delegation.

## Concept 4

**Deciding on the proper level of authority to release is a critical element of delegation.**

Based on the job and the individual volunteer, you may choose to retain some level of review over the work being done by the volunteer or you may completely turn over the assignment, and the responsibility, to the volunteer.

# Delegation

## Definition and Cardinal Rules

### Definition

Assigning mutually agreed-upon results, an appropriate level of authority and support to get those results, and a follow-up system which allows you to **inspect** what you **expect**.

### Cardinal Rules of Delegation

1. Match the work assignment and the corresponding ability (and availability) of the volunteer.
2. Give the assignment in terms of results.
3. Define the level of authority.
4. Communicate any guidelines.
5. Make resources available.
6. Determine criteria for success.
7. Set up checkpoints.
8. Provide feedback and recognition along the way and at the completion of a project.
9. Avoid reverse delegation.

# Levels of Authority in Delegation

## Level 4

**No authority for self-assignment.** Not really delegation. The volunteer is not permitted to make any decisions on the project.

## Level 3

**The authority to recommend self-assignment.** The most basic level of authority. Volunteer must bring suggestions forward for approval before moving ahead.

## Level 2

**The authority for self-assignment provided regular progress reports are received.** Given to volunteers who are trusted to make some independent decisions. You do ask for a report of what actions are taken in order to maintain control.

## Level 1

**The authority for self-assignment.** Given when you have complete trust in the volunteer's competence and commitment to a task or job. You ask for contact only if the volunteer has a problem or feels you need to be apprised of the situation.