

Delegate Like a Manager at Home

Hand off a household job so it actually stays handed off

Good managers don't delegate by saying "can you help with this" and hoping. They define what done looks like, name an owner, set a check-in, and then get out of the way. Most of us skip every one of those steps at home. We ask our partner to "help more with mornings," they do one thing wrong, we swoop back in, and now we're back to doing it ourselves while resenting everyone involved. Delegation at home fails for the exact same reason it fails at work: nobody agreed on what "done" means. This fixes that in fifteen minutes.

What you need: the job you want off your plate, the person taking it (partner, kid, sitter), fifteen minutes to talk it through before the handoff starts.

The steps

1. **Name the actual job, not the vibe.** (2 minutes) Not "help with mornings." Try "get the kids fed, dressed, and out the door by 7:45." Specific enough that two people could grade it the same way.
2. **Define done.** (3 minutes) What does success look like on a normal day? What's the non-negotiable (out the door on time) versus the flexible part (what they eat, what they wear)? Say both out loud.
3. **Pick the owner and say it's theirs.** (2 minutes) One person, not a rotating "whoever's around." Ownership without a name attached is just a chore floating in space.
4. **Set the check-in, not the check-up.** (3 minutes) Agree on when you'll talk about how it's going: Sunday night, once a week, whatever. Not you hovering Tuesday morning asking if the socks matched.
5. **Say the hard part out loud: it'll be done differently.** (3 minutes) Not wrong, different. Decide in advance which differences you can live with, so you're not relitigating it in the moment.
6. **Let go for a real stretch.** (2 minutes) Give it two full weeks before you evaluate. One rough Tuesday isn't data.

Your delegation plan

The job, specifically

What "done" looks like

The owner

Non-negotiable

Fine if it's different

Check-in day

When it goes sideways

You keep stepping in “just this once.” Every step-in resets the clock and teaches the other person you didn’t actually mean it. If it’s not dangerous or truly urgent, let it play out.

They do it differently and it bugs you more than you expected. Go back to the non-negotiable line you wrote down. If it’s not on that list, it’s your preference, not their failure.

The kid or sitter you delegated to needs more structure than a partner would. Shrink the job and add a visual checklist instead of walking away completely. Delegation still works, it just needs a shorter leash at first.

A job that’s really handed off doesn’t need you to remember it exists. That’s how you know it worked.