



# 7. PROBATION

## WHAT TO DO AND WHAT NOT TO DO

The probationary period typically takes place within the first 3 to 6 months of a volunteer's journey. Probation is a time where new volunteers and the volunteering group can assess if the role and group is the right fit for the new volunteer.

Here are some tips on what you should and should not do for probation:

PROBATION DO'S	PROBATION DON'TS
<b>COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give new volunteers relevant and clear information early on (<b>see Induction section</b>).</li> <li>• Communicate what is expected of the new volunteer (e.g., hours needed per week, rules to follow).</li> <li>• Inform the new volunteers what the probationary period is for and how long it will be.</li> <li>• Provide volunteers positive and constructive feedback on their performance and/or progress.</li> </ul>	<b>INEFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not providing new volunteers with enough information or giving them too much information at once.</li> <li>• Not communicating regularly with new volunteers.</li> <li>• Not giving new volunteers feedback on their performance and/or progress.</li> <li>• Not informing new volunteers what the outcome of their probationary period is upon completion.</li> </ul>
<b>SUPPORT VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide new volunteers with social support (<b>see Support section</b>).</li> <li>• Give volunteers the means to complete the basic training they need.</li> </ul>	<b>RESTRICT SUPPORT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Withholding the new volunteers' registration papers for longer than a month.</li> <li>• Socially isolating the new volunteers.</li> <li>• Preventing new volunteers from doing any basic training.</li> </ul>
<b>CLARIFY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify any concerns or questions the new volunteers may have about their role.</li> </ul>	<b>TREAT VOLUNTEERS UNFAIRLY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Setting unrealistic expectations for the new volunteers (e.g., expecting them to always be available).</li> <li>• Assessing the new volunteers based on traits that are not related to the role (e.g., their sense of humour or interest in certain sports).</li> </ul>
<b>ASSESS FIT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use this period as a time to assess fit (e.g., how well the new volunteer mixes with other volunteers, how well they perform tasks).</li> <li>• Inform new volunteers on the outcome of their probationary period upon completion.</li> </ul>	





## THINKING EXERCISE

Take some time to reflect on the probationary practices you put in place for new volunteers that join your volunteering group.

1. How long is a probationary period for new volunteers that join your group?
2. What are new volunteers allowed and not allowed to do during probation?
3. What training and support is given to new volunteers while they are on probation?
4. What improvements could you make to the probation process?

