

Cheat Sheet How to Tell an Employee Isn't Ready for a Promotion

A Manager's Cheat Sheet for Fair & Clear Decisions

Step 1: Look for Readiness Signs

- Consistent performance at current level
- Ability to handle increased responsibility
- Demonstrated leadership and collaboration skills
- Strong decision-making under pressure

Step 2: Red Flags They're Not Ready

- Struggles with current workload
- Needs constant supervision or direction
- Gaps in emotional intelligence or communication
- Avoids accountability for mistakes
- Resistant to feedback or growth opportunities

Step 3: Communicate "Not Yet" Effectively

- Be **honest but supportive**
- Frame it as: *"Here's what growth looks like to get there"*
- Share specific examples, not vague impressions
- Avoid making it feel like a rejection—it's a **development opportunity**

Step 4: Create a Growth Plan

- Set clear, measurable goals for improvement
- Offer mentorship, training, or stretch assignments
- Provide regular feedback and track progress
- Revisit promotion readiness at agreed intervals

Step 5: Think Long-Term

- Promotions are about **timing and readiness**, not just tenure
- By delaying, you protect the employee *and* the team
- A well-prepared promotion = stronger leadership pipeline

 **Pro Tip:** Saying "not yet" with clarity and compassion builds trust and motivates employees to grow.

 **Action for You Today:** Review your team and note 1–2 employees who may be close but not fully ready. What specific skills or habits would help them bridge the gap?