

**SharePoint List and List Item Permissions: End User Guide**

**Understanding SharePoint Permissions Hierarchy**

SharePoint permissions operate on multiple levels, with a clear hierarchy that controls access to content[[1]](#fn1)[[2]](#fn2). **List and list item permissions** are specific controls that allow you to manage who can view, edit, or interact with data in SharePoint lists and Microsoft Lists[[3]](#fn3)[[2]](#fn2).

**Permission Inheritance:** By default, all lists inherit permissions from their parent site, and list items inherit permissions from their parent list[[2]](#fn2). This cascading system means that if a user has access to a site, they typically have the same level of access to all lists within that site unless unique permissions are configured.

**Default Permission Levels for Lists**

SharePoint provides several built-in permission levels that determine what users can do with list content[[4]](#fn4)[[5]](#fn5):

**Read:** Users can view list items and download documents but cannot make changes[[4]](#fn4).

**Contribute:** Users can view, add, edit, and delete list items they create[[4]](#fn4).

**Edit:** Users can manage lists and edit all items regardless of who created them[[4]](#fn4).

**Design:** Users can view, add, update, delete, approve, and customize items or pages[[4]](#fn4).

**Full Control:** Users have complete control over the list and all its items[[4]](#fn4).

**Configuring List-Level Permissions**

**Breaking Permission Inheritance**

To set unique permissions for a list, you must first break inheritance from the parent site[[1]](#fn1)[[2]](#fn2):

1. Navigate to your list and click the **Settings** gear icon
2. Select **List settings**
3. Click **Permissions for this list**
4. In the ribbon, click **Stop Inheriting Permissions**
5. Confirm by clicking **OK**

**Adding Users to List Permissions**

Once inheritance is broken, you can grant specific users or groups access to the list[[1]](#fn1)[[2]](#fn2):

1. In the list permissions page, click **Grant Permissions**
2. Enter the names or email addresses of users you want to add
3. Click **Show options** to select specific permission levels
4. Choose the appropriate permission level (Read, Contribute, Edit, etc.)
5. Click **Share** to apply the permissions

**Item-Level Permissions Configuration**

**Enabling Item-Level Permissions**

SharePoint offers a powerful feature called **Item-Level Permissions** that allows users to see and edit only the items they created[[1]](#fn1)[[3]](#fn3)[[6]](#fn6):

1. Go to **List Settings**
2. Click **Advanced Settings**
3. Scroll to the **Item-Level Permissions** section

**Item-Level Permission Options**

**Read Access Settings:**

* **Read all items:** Users can view all list items (default setting)[[1]](#fn1)[[6]](#fn6)
* **Read items that were created by the user:** Users can only view items they personally created[[1]](#fn1)[[6]](#fn6)

**Create and Edit Access Settings:**

* **Create and edit all items:** Users can modify any list item (default setting)[[1]](#fn1)[[6]](#fn6)
* **Create items and edit items that were created by the user:** Users can only modify items they created[[1]](#fn1)[[6]](#fn6)
* **None:** Users cannot create any items[[1]](#fn1)[[6]](#fn6)

**Creating Custom Permission Levels for Item Override**

For managers or supervisors who need to see all items despite item-level restrictions, create a custom permission level[[7]](#fn7):

1. Go to **Site Settings** > **Site Permissions**
2. Click **Permission Levels** in the ribbon
3. Click **Add a Permission Level**
4. Name the permission level (e.g., "Manager Access")
5. Include the **Override List Behaviors** permission
6. Assign this custom permission level to specific users who need broader access[[7]](#fn7)

**Managing Individual Item Permissions**

**Setting Unique Permissions on Specific Items**

For granular control over individual list items[[1]](#fn1)[[8]](#fn8):

1. Click the **three dots** next to the specific list item
2. Select **Manage access**
3. Click **Advanced settings**
4. Click **Stop inheriting permissions** to break inheritance
5. Add or remove users as needed using **Grant Permissions** or **Remove User Permissions**

**Best Practices for Item Permissions**

**Use Groups Instead of Individual Users:** Always assign permissions to SharePoint groups rather than individual users for easier management[[9]](#fn9)[[10]](#fn10).

**Limit Unique Permissions:** Each list has a practical limit of unique permissions. Avoid creating too many individual item permissions as this can impact performance[[11]](#fn11).

**Regular Auditing:** Periodically review item-level permissions to ensure they align with current business needs[[12]](#fn12).

**Common Permission Scenarios and Solutions**

**Scenario 1: Employee Self-Service Lists**

For HR forms, expense reports, or help desk tickets where users should only see their own submissions[[13]](#fn13)[[14]](#fn14):

1. Set **Read access** to "Read items that were created by the user"
2. Set **Create and Edit access** to "Create items and edit items that were created by the user"
3. Create a manager group with **Override List Behaviors** permission

**Scenario 2: Manager Approval Workflows**

When managers need to approve or review items created by their team members[[8]](#fn8)[[15]](#fn15):

1. Enable item-level permissions for regular users
2. Use Power Automate to automatically grant managers access to specific items based on column values
3. Create custom permission levels that include **Override List Behaviors** for supervisory roles

**Scenario 3: Department-Specific Access**

For lists where different departments need access to different items[[16]](#fn16)[[17]](#fn17):

1. Break list inheritance
2. Create department-specific SharePoint groups
3. Use views filtered by department or user properties
4. Consider using separate lists for truly confidential information

**Checking and Troubleshooting Permissions**

**Verifying User Access**

To check what permissions a user has on a list or item[[12]](#fn12)[[18]](#fn18):

1. Navigate to the list or specific item
2. Click **Manage access** (for items) or go to **List Settings** > **Permissions for this list**
3. Select **Check Permissions** from the ribbon
4. Enter the user's name to see their current permission level

**Common Issues and Solutions**

**Users Can't See Items They Should Access:** Verify that item-level permissions aren't blocking access and that the user has the correct permission level[[19]](#fn19).

**Managers Can't Override Item Restrictions:** Ensure the manager's permission level includes **Override List Behaviors** permission[[19]](#fn19)[[7]](#fn7).

**External Users Can't Access Shared Items:** Check site-level sharing settings and ensure external sharing is enabled at both the site and tenant level[[20]](#fn20).

**Security Best Practices**

**Principle of Least Privilege:** Grant users the minimum permissions necessary to perform their job functions[[21]](#fn21)[[22]](#fn22).

**Use Standard Groups:** Leverage the three default SharePoint groups (Owners, Members, Visitors) whenever possible rather than creating complex custom permission structures[[23]](#fn23)[[10]](#fn10).

**Regular Permission Audits:** Conduct periodic reviews of list and item permissions to identify and remove unnecessary access[[12]](#fn12).

**Document Permission Structure:** Maintain clear documentation of your permission model for easier troubleshooting and compliance[[10]](#fn10).

**Training and Communication:** Ensure users understand how permissions work and their responsibilities when sharing content[[23]](#fn23).

By following this guide, you can effectively manage list and list item permissions in SharePoint while maintaining security and enabling appropriate collaboration within your organization.

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