



FREE PLAYBOOK FOR ATHLETICS CLUBS

Keep them running.

How to turn first-season athletes into members who stay for years. The 6 moments athletes drift away, 8 habits that keep them registering, and messages you can send today.

6

moments athletes are most likely to drift away

8

habits that keep athletes registering season after season

6

copy-and-send messages, plus a goal bank for every age group

One registered athlete is worth years of seasons.

Athletics clubs rarely struggle to fill the first night of the season. The clubs that grow are the ones that turn first-season kids into athletes who come back every year.

\$640

One athlete, one season

Season registration at **\$220**
+ **2 training nights a week** at \$14 × 30 weeks
= **\$640 a season** from one athlete

\$5,000+

The same athlete from U9 to U17

Eight seasons of registrations and training, before you count comp entries, uniforms, camps or the younger brothers and sisters who join at U6. Lose them after their first season and all of that walks away.

Replacing an athlete means school flyers, come-and-try days and hoping they register. Keeping one means a clear pathway, visible PBs and a few well-timed messages to families.

Most dropouts are predictable. Athletes rarely quit out of nowhere. They drift away at a handful of moments every club will recognise, and each one is a chance to step in. The next page shows you where they are.

Where an athlete's value really comes from

Registration and training

The steady base: season fees and weekly training nights across every age group.

Competition and extras

Comp entries, relays, uniforms, holiday camps and squad sessions.

Families

Athletics is a family sport. Happy parents bring siblings, friends and volunteer hours.

Figures are examples. Swap in your own prices, weeks and currency.

The 6 moments athletes are most likely to drift away

Know when athletes drift and you know when to step in. Watch these six closely.

AFTER COME-AND-TRY

1

“We’ll think about it”

The come-and-try day is fun, then registration feels like a big form and a bigger fee. The family moves on.

Do this: make registering a two-minute job on the day.

FIRST COMP DAY

2

Lost and last

A new athlete doesn’t know where to go, which event is next or what a heat is. They finish last and feel silly.

Do this: give every first-timer a buddy and a simple plan.

MOVING AGE GROUP

3

New events, new faces

Moving up an age group means longer races, new events and a new coach. Friends drift into other groups.

Do this: move friends up together and introduce the coach early.

AFTER AN INJURY

4

Not coming back

Shin splints or a sore hamstring keeps them home. Without a plan, three weeks off becomes the rest of the season.

Do this: agree a safe return plan and check in weekly.

WINTER AND OTHER SPORTS

5

The season ends

The summer season ends and winter football takes over. Next season’s registration lands in a busy inbox.

Do this: keep in touch with a winter program or cross country.

THE TEENAGE YEARS

6

Training feels pointless

Teenagers who don’t win want a reason to keep going. Without one, they stop.

Do this: track PBs, not places, and give them a role.

Quick exercise: think of the last five athletes who didn’t re-register. Which moment did each leave at? Most clubs find one or two moments explain most of their dropouts. Fix those first.

Habits that keep athletes registering season after season

1 Turn every come-and-try into a registration

Come-and-try days are where most athletes start, and where many stop. Make registering the easy next step, on the day.

TRY THIS

- ✓ Have a **QR code to register** at the gate and at the finish line.
- ✓ Offer a **first-season price** or a free first fortnight to get families over the line.
- ✓ Send a **welcome note** the same day with training times, what to bring and who their coach is.

2 Group athletes by age and stage

A training group works when athletes are at a similar stage. Mix a nervous U8 with confident U11s and both groups suffer.

TRY THIS

- ✓ Group athletes by **age group**, then split by stage where numbers allow.
- ✓ Keep **coach ratios** small for little athletes, like 1:8 for U6–U8.
- ✓ Rotate event groups each month so every athlete tries **run, jump and throw**.

Ready-made goals for every age group

Pick two or three goals per athlete and adjust them to suit your club. These are examples to adapt, not official standards.

AGE GROUP	RUN	JUMP	THROW
Tots U6-U8	Run 70 m without slowing down	Two-foot take-off into the sandpit	Throw a soft ball past the 5 m line
Juniors U9-U12	Crouch start with good reaction	Run-up and one-foot take-off in long jump	Correct grip and stance in shot put
Youth U13-U15	Three steps between hurdles	Scissor or flop technique in high jump	Glide or rotation in discus
Seniors U16+	Pace a 400 m in even splits	Hit the board on 8 of 10 run-ups	A PB at every comp this season

Before moving an athlete into a squad, check three things

Consistency

They hit their goals at most sessions, not just once on a good night.

Commitment

They come regularly. An athlete who trains once a month will struggle in a squad.

Enjoyment

They want more. A squad should feel like a reward, not pressure.

Keep the club's own events in the mix. Not every athlete wants to specialise. Make sure there's a home for kids who just love the club night, as well as those chasing state titles.

3 Celebrate PBs, not just places

Only one athlete wins each race. Every athlete can run a personal best. PBs keep athletes coming back.

TRY THIS

- ✓ Log **results and PBs** after every comp, for every athlete.
- ✓ Shout out **PBs of the week** at training and in the club newsletter.
- ✓ Share each athlete's **season progress** with their family at the end of the season.

4 Make the club feel like a team

Athletes stay where they have friends. A child who knows nobody in their group is the first to drift.

TRY THIS

- ✓ Give every new athlete a **buddy** in their age group for the first month.
- ✓ Run **relays and team events** so every athlete races for the club.
- ✓ Hold an **end-of-season night** with awards for effort, PBs and club spirit.

Keep it specific: "Ella cut a second off her 100 m today" means more to a parent than a long, general report. Specific beats long, every time.

5 Plan the way back after an injury

Growing bodies get sore. What matters is whether the athlete comes back to a plan, or to nothing.

TRY THIS

- ✓ When a parent reports an injury, reply with **what they can still do** at training.
- ✓ Store **medical notes and clearances** on the athlete's profile.
- ✓ Check in after **two weeks away**, with a gentle way back into their group.

6 Give athletes something to do between sessions

Fitness and skills are built between training nights. An athlete with a small task at home improves faster, and stays.

TRY THIS

- ✓ Set one small task, like “**skipping 3 × 1 minute**” or “**10 bounding strides**”.
- ✓ Let athletes **tick tasks off in the app** so coaches see who practised.
- ✓ Praise the effort, not just the time. Times follow practice.

Watch your waitlists: U6–U9 groups fill first. A long waitlist is a sign to recruit a parent helper or add a training night.

7 Act on three quiet weeks

Athletes rarely say they're leaving. Missed training comes first. If an athlete has missed three weeks, they're already drifting.

TRY THIS

- ✓ Check each week for athletes who have **missed three sessions** in a row.
- ✓ Send a **personal message**, not a promotion: "We missed Zoe at hurdles this week."
- ✓ Offer an **easy way back**: a different training night or a fun relay session.

8 Re-register before the season ends

The end of the season is when families decide. Make coming back the easy option, before the decision even comes up.

TRY THIS

- ✓ Open **next season's registration** before the last comp day.
- ✓ Tell families which **age group and coach** they'll have next season.
- ✓ Ask anyone who doesn't return **one question**: "What's the main reason?"

Make staying the default: when re-registering takes one tap and leaving takes a decision, more families stay. Rolling memberships do this best.

6 messages you can use today

Swap in the words in teal and send by SMS, email or your app. Short and personal works best.

After come-and-try

HABIT 1

Hi **parent** , **name** was great today! Training is **Tuesday 5:30 pm** with **coach** . Register for the season here: **link** .

Comp day

HABIT 4

Hi **parent** , **name** is entered in **100 m, long jump and relay** on **Saturday** . Arrive by **8 am** and meet **coach** at the **club tent** .

New PB

HABIT 3

Hi **parent** , **name** ran a PB in the **200 m** today: **31.4 s** ! That's **1.2 s** faster than the start of the season.

Injury note

HABIT 5

Thanks for letting us know, **parent** . **name** can still come and do **drills and throws** . No sprinting this week. We'll check in next week.

Quiet weeks

HABIT 7

Hi **parent** , we've missed **name** at training. Is everything OK? **Thursday's relay night** could be a fun way back.

Re-registration

HABIT 8

Hi **parent** , next season starts **date** . **name** will be in **U12** with **coach** . Keep their spot in one tap here: **link** .

Send them from one place. When messages live in one app instead of a coach's personal phone, any coach or committee member can pick up a conversation and nothing gets lost.

Know your retention rate

Athletics clubs run in seasons, so measure it each season, and keep an eye on attendance monthly. It takes two minutes and tells you whether your new habits are working.

$$\frac{\text{Athletes registered last season and this season}}{\text{Athletes registered last season}} \times 100 = \text{Retention rate}$$

Example: 240 athletes registered last summer. 180 of them registered again this season. That's $180 \div 240 \times 100 = 75\%$ retention. You kept 180 of last season's 240 athletes.

Your monthly scorecard

Fill it in at the start of each month. Splitting by age group shows you exactly where athletes are leaking out.

MEASURE	HOW TO WORK IT OUT	MONTH 1	MONTH 2
Retention rate	Use the formula above		
Come-and-try that registered	Come-and-try athletes who joined		
Training attendance	Sessions attended ÷ sessions offered		
Comp entries	Athletes who entered at least one comp		
Quiet athletes	Athletes who missed 3 weeks in a row		
PBs this month	Athletes with at least one new PB		
Top reason for leaving	From your one-question exit check		

Watch the trend, not one number. If most of your losses are teenagers, that's where to put your effort next season.

A simple plan to get started

You don't need to do everything at once. Pick up one or two habits a week and they'll soon be part of how your club runs.

WEEK 1

See where you stand

- ☐ Work out last season's retention rate
- ☐ List five athletes who didn't return, and why
- ☐ Set your age groups and ratios

WEEK 2

Fix the first season

- ☐ Add a QR code to register
- ☐ Send a welcome note to every new family
- ☐ Give every new athlete a buddy

WEEK 3

Celebrate progress

- ☐ Log results and PBs after every comp
- ☐ Start PBs of the week
- ☐ Set one home task per group

WEEK 4

Lock in next season

- ☐ Message families with three quiet weeks
- ☐ Open next season's registration early
- ☐ Plan your end-of-season night

Tip: put a reminder in your calendar for the first day of every month to fill in the scorecard on page 10. Small, steady improvements add up fast.

Run all 8 habits without the extra admin

Every habit here works with a spreadsheet and a phone. They're far easier to keep up when your software does the remembering. That's why we built Outcoach.

Registration in minutes

Families register and pay online from a QR code or your website.

Age groups and coaches

Groups by age and stage, with coaches and ratios on every session.

Results and PBs

Log comp results and PBs, and share progress with families.

Comp day messages

Tell every family their events and times in one go.

Quiet athletes flagged

See who has missed three weeks before they drift away.

Easy re-registration

Next season's fees and spots, in one tap.

Turn first-season athletes into members

Outcoach brings registrations, training nights, age groups, comps, results and payments into one app, with AI that does the admin for you.

Start your free trial at outcoach.io

Questions? Email support@outcoach.io and a real person will get back to you.