

FREE GUIDE FOR COACHING BUSINESSES

Keep them coming back.

The coach's guide to keeping students longer: 8 simple habits that cut dropouts, plus message templates you can copy today.

4

moments when students
are most likely to quit

8

habits that keep families
enrolled term after term

30

day action plan with ready-
to-send messages

Every student who leaves takes a year of fees **with them.**

Most coaching businesses spend their energy finding new students. But the quickest way to grow is to stop losing the ones you already have.

\$1,920

What one student can be worth in a year

1 class a week = **4 classes a month**

4 classes × \$40 = **\$160 a month**

\$160 × 12 months = **\$1,920 a year**

\$48,000

What 25 dropouts cost in a year

If you have 100 students and a quarter of them leave each year, that's 25 × \$1,920 in fees that walk out the door. Keep even five of them and you're \$9,600 better off.

"Acquiring a new customer is anywhere from five to 25 times more expensive than retaining an existing one."

Harvard Business Review, "The Value of Keeping the Right Customers" (2014)

Replacing a student means paying for ads, running trials and hoping they convert. Keeping a student means a few well-timed messages and making sure families can see the progress they're paying for.

The good news: most dropouts are predictable. Students rarely leave out of nowhere. They drift away at a handful of moments, and each one gives you a chance to step in. That's what the rest of this guide is about.

Example figures are for illustration. Use your own numbers, or try the retention calculator at outcoach.io.

The 4 moments students are most likely to quit

If you know when students drift away, you know when to step in. Watch these four moments closely.

WEEKS 1-6

1

The first few weeks

New students haven't built a habit yet, and parents are still deciding whether it's worth it. A confusing start, a missed welcome or a class that feels too hard can end things before they begin.

MONTHS 3-9

2

The plateau

The early excitement fades and progress feels slower. If students and parents can't see improvement, the class starts to feel optional, and other activities win.

ANY TIME

3

A run of missed classes

Two missed classes in a row is often the first real sign of drifting. Each week away makes the next class easier to skip, and harder to come back to.

END OF TERM

4

Re-enrolment time

This is the moment families actively decide. If re-enrolling takes effort, needs a reminder they never got, or arrives with a surprise invoice, many simply don't.

Quick exercise: think of the last five students who left. Which of these moments did each of them leave at? Most coaches find one or two moments explain most of their dropouts. Start there.

Habits that keep families enrolled term after term

1

Win the first month

The first few weeks set the tone for everything after. Make new families feel expected, looked after and confident they chose the right place.

TRY THIS

- ✓ Send a **welcome message before the first class**: what to bring, where to go and the coach's name.
- ✓ Give every new student an **early, visible win** in their first three classes, something they can tell their parents about.
- ✓ **Check in after week one** with a short message to the parent: "How did they find it?"

2

Make progress visible

Parents keep paying for what they can see. If progress only lives in the coach's head, the class starts to feel like it isn't going anywhere.

TRY THIS

- ✓ Set **two or three clear goals** for each student, in plain words a parent understands.
- ✓ Share a **short progress update every 4–6 weeks**, even if it's two sentences.
- ✓ Use **levels, badges or certificates** so progress has milestones, not just a feeling.

3

Treat two missed classes as a warning

One missed class is life. Two in a row is a pattern. Reaching out early, kindly and personally, brings far more students back than waiting.

TRY THIS

- ✓ **Track attendance every class**, so you notice patterns instead of finding out at re-enrolment.
- ✓ After **two missed classes in a row**, send a friendly personal message. No guilt, just "we've missed them".
- ✓ Offer an easy way back, like a **makeup class** or a quick catch-up at the start of the next session.

4

Make makeups easy

When a missed class feels like wasted money, families start to resent the fees. A simple makeup option turns a frustration into a reason to stay.

TRY THIS

- ✓ Write a **clear makeup policy**: how many, how far ahead, and which classes count.
- ✓ Let families **book makeups themselves**, rather than messaging you and waiting.
- ✓ Show **available makeup spots** so families can pick a time that works.

Rule of thumb: the sooner you reach out after a missed class, the easier it is to come back. A message in the same week feels caring. A message a month later feels like a sales call.

5

Talk to parents before there's a problem

If parents only hear from you when an invoice is due or something's gone wrong, every message feels like bad news. Regular, positive contact builds trust you can lean on later.

TRY THIS

- ✓ Send a **short class update** each term: what you're working on and what's coming up.
- ✓ Make a **"good news" message** a habit. Tell a parent something great their child did.
- ✓ Keep all messages in **one channel**, not spread across personal phones and group chats.

6

Celebrate wins out loud

Students stay where they feel noticed. Celebrating achievements, big and small, gives students pride and gives parents something to share.

TRY THIS

- ✓ Mark milestones with **certificates, badges or a level-up moment** in class.
- ✓ Give **shout-outs** for effort and improvement, not just talent.
- ✓ Share **competition results and achievements** with parents the same day.

Keep it specific: a two-line update like "Sam swam a full length of backstroke today" means more to a parent than a long, general report. Specific beats long, every time.

7

Make re-enrolment effortless

Many families who don't come back never actually decided to leave. They just didn't get around to re-enrolling. Remove every bit of effort you can.

TRY THIS

- ✓ **Open re-enrolment early**, before the current term ends, while families are still engaged.
- ✓ Send **clear reminders** with a direct link to book and pay in one step.
- ✓ Offer to **hold their spot** or roll them over automatically, so staying is the default.

8

Ask the ones who leave

Every student who leaves knows exactly why. A short, friendly question gives you the most useful feedback you'll ever get, and sometimes wins the family back.

TRY THIS

- ✓ Ask **two questions only**: "What's the main reason you're leaving?" and "What could we have done better?"
- ✓ Look for **patterns each term**. One comment is an opinion; five is a problem to fix.
- ✓ **Leave the door open**: thank them and let them know they're welcome back any time.

Make staying the default: when re-enrolling takes one tap and leaving takes a decision, more families stay. Every extra step you remove keeps a few more students.

4 message templates you can use today

Swap in the words in teal and send by SMS, email or your app. Keep them short and personal.

Welcome, before the first class

HABIT 1

Hi **parent name**, we're so glad **student name** is joining us! Their first class is **day and time** at **location**. Please bring **what to bring**. Their coach is **coach name**, who'll look after them from the start. Any questions, just reply here.

After two missed classes

HABIT 3

Hi **parent name**, we've missed **student name** the last couple of weeks! Hope all is well. If it helps, they're welcome to join a makeup class on **day and time** to catch up. Just let me know.

Progress update

HABIT 2

Hi **parent name**, a quick update on **student name**. This term they've **one specific improvement**, and they're now working on **next goal**. They should be really proud. Thanks for your support!

Re-enrolment reminder

HABIT 7

Hi **parent name**, enrolments for **next term** are now open, and we'd love to keep **student name** in their spot in **class name**. You can confirm and pay here: **link**. Spots are held for current students until **date**.

Know your retention rate

You can't improve what you don't measure. Work out your retention rate each term. It takes two minutes and shows you whether your new habits are working.

$$\frac{\text{Students at end of term} - \text{new students who joined}}{\text{Students at start of term}} \times 100 = \text{Retention rate}$$

Example: you start the term with 100 students. 15 new students join and you finish with 105. That's $(105 - 15) \div 100 \times 100 = 90\%$ retention. You kept 90 of the 100 students you started with.

Your termly scorecard

Fill this in at the end of each term and compare.

Measure	How to work it out	Term 1	Term 2
Retention rate	Use the formula above		
Students who left	Count everyone who didn't re-enrol		
Average attendance	Classes attended ÷ classes booked		
Re-enrolled early	Families who confirmed before term ended		
Top reason for leaving	From your exit question (habit 8)		

Watch the trend, not just the number. Work it out the same way every term. A retention rate that climbs a few points each term is worth far more than any single result.

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 become part of how you run things.

WEEK 1

See where you stand

- ☐ Work out your retention rate for last term
- ☐ List the last five students who left, and when
- ☐ Start taking attendance every class

WEEK 2

Fix the first month

- ☐ Set up your welcome message template
- ☐ Plan an early win for new students
- ☐ Check in with every family who joined recently

WEEK 3

Show progress

- ☐ Set two or three goals for each student
- ☐ Send your first progress updates to parents
- ☐ Message anyone who's missed two classes

WEEK 4

Lock in next term

- ☐ Write a clear makeup policy
- ☐ Open re-enrolment early with a one-step link
- ☐ Add your two-question exit survey

Tip: put a recurring reminder in your calendar for the last week of every term to fill in your scorecard on page 9. Small, steady improvements add up fast.

Do all 8 habits **without the extra admin**

Every habit in this guide works with a spreadsheet and a phone. But they're much easier to keep up when your tools do the remembering for you. That's why we built Outcoach.

Win the first month

Online bookings and built-in messages to welcome every new family.

Make progress visible

Goals, evaluations and a parent dashboard that shows progress as it happens.

Spot missed classes

Attendance tracking in a tap, so patterns stand out early.

Easy makeups

Families book their own makeup classes from your free booking page.

Talk to parents

SMS, email and in-app messages, all linked to each student.

Effortless re-enrolment

Payment is taken at booking, with automatic reminders and memberships.

Keep more of your students, starting this term

Outcoach brings scheduling, bookings, payments, parent updates and progress tracking 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.