



FREE PLAYBOOK FOR MUSIC SCHOOLS

Keep them playing.

How to turn trial lessons into students who stay for years. The 6 moments music students give up, 8 habits that keep them learning, and messages you can send today.

6

moments music students are most likely to give up

8

habits that keep students enrolled term after term

6

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

One regular student is worth years of bookings.

Music schools are good at booking trial lessons. The schools that grow are the ones that turn those trials into students who stay for years, and keep them.

\$1,600

One student, one 30-minute lesson a week, for a year

1 private lesson a week at **\$40**
× **40 weeks** of term time in a year
= **\$1,600 a year** from one student

\$4,800+

The same student over three years

Three years of weekly lessons, before you count group classes, exam prep, holiday workshops, instrument hire or the brothers and sisters who follow. Lose them after their first term and all of that walks away.

Replacing a student means ads, free trials and hoping they enrol. Keeping one means a clear next step, practice that actually happens and a few well-timed messages to parents.

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

Where a student's value really comes from

Weekly lessons

The steady base: private lessons and group classes booked term after term.

Extras

Exam prep, ensembles, holiday workshops and instrument hire from students who already love playing.

Word of mouth

Music schools grow through families. Happy parents bring siblings, cousins and school friends.

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

The 6 moments music students are most likely to drift away

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

AFTER THE TRIAL LESSON

1

“Now what?”

The trial goes well, then nothing happens. No time is offered, no term is booked, and the family moves on.

Do this: offer a regular time before they leave.

MONTHS 2–4

2

Practice stops at home

The novelty wears off. Without a clear task between lessons, the instrument stays in its case all week.

Do this: set one small practice task each lesson.

MONTHS 6–12

3

Stuck on the same piece

Early progress is fast, then it stalls. Without a goal to chase, students and parents start to wonder if it's worth it.

Do this: give every student a goal they can see.

FIRST TERM

4

Playing alone

Lessons are one-on-one. Students who never play with others, or for others, miss the fun part of music.

Do this: add ensembles and recitals.

HOLIDAYS AND EXAM SEASON

5

The routine breaks

School holidays, sport and exams get in the way. Each missed lesson makes the next one easier to skip.

Do this: use makeup lessons and holiday workshops.

END OF TERM

6

The term runs out

Re-enrolment arrives with no reason to carry on. Parents don't decide to stop. They just don't sign up again.

Do this: re-enrol before the term ends.

Quick exercise: think of the last five students who stopped coming. Which moment did each leave at? Most schools find one or two moments explain most of their dropouts. Fix those first.

Habits that keep students booking week after week

1 Turn every trial into a regular time

The trial lesson is where most students start, and where many stop. The fix is simple: never let a trial end without a regular time offered and held.

TRY THIS

- ✓ At the end of the trial, **offer two regular times** that suit the family, there and then.
- ✓ Send the **term invoice and a welcome note** the same day, while the excitement is fresh.
- ✓ Tell parents **what to buy and what to expect** in the first month: books, practice time and how progress is shared.

2 Match group classes by grade

Group classes work when everyone is at a similar level. Mix grades at random and the strong students get bored while the new ones feel lost.

TRY THIS

- ✓ Give every student a **grade or level**: their exam grade if they have one, or your own levels.
- ✓ Build **group classes by grade**, and say so when families enrol.
- ✓ Keep **one mixed ensemble**, where older students help younger ones and everyone plays together.

Ready-made goals for every level

Pick two or three per student and adjust them to suit the instrument. The levels follow common exam grades, so they line up with whatever exam board you use, or your own levels. These are examples to adapt, not official standards.

Level	Technique and scales	Pieces and performance	Reading and aural
 Beginner Pre-grade	Five-finger position, both hands	Play a short piece from memory	Read notes in the treble clef; clap a 4-bar rhythm
 Grades 1–3 Building skills	C, G and D major scales hands together	Two exam pieces at performance standard	Sight-read 8 bars with a steady pulse
 Grades 4–5 Confident student	All major and minor scales for the grade	Perform a piece at a recital	Sing back a 2-bar phrase; spot key changes
 Grades 6–8 Advanced	Scales and arpeggios at exam tempo	A full recital programme from memory	Sight-read a full page; aural tests 16/18

Before you invite a student up a level, check four things

Consistency

They hit the goals for their level on most attempts, not just once.

Confidence

They play their pieces with confidence and want more of a challenge.

Activity

They play regularly. A student who comes once a month will struggle more after the move.

The fourth check is the group. Introduce the student to an ensemble or class at the next level. Playing with others at the new level makes the move stick.

3

Give every student a goal they can see

“Getting better” is vague. “Play C, G and D major scales hands together” is something a student can chase, measure and feel proud of. Goals turn casual learners into committed ones.

TRY THIS

- ✓ Set **two or three goals per student** from the goal bank, written in plain words.
- ✓ Check the **same skills the same way** every 6–8 weeks, so progress shows up as a number.
- ✓ Share a **two-line progress note** with parents after each check.

4

Give them a reason to perform

Students practise harder when someone will hear them. A recital date, an exam or a band gig turns weekly lessons into something worth working for.

TRY THIS

- ✓ Hold a **recital every term**, even a small one in the studio, and give every student a spot.
- ✓ Start a **band or ensemble** at each level, so students make music with friends.
- ✓ **Celebrate milestones** out loud: a first piece, an exam pass or a first gig, shared the same day.

Keep it specific: “Mia played all three scales hands together today, up from one last month” means more to a parent than a long, general report. Specific beats long, every time.

5

Turn missed lessons into makeups, not a lost week

Colds, camps and school events will cancel lessons. What matters is whether parents feel they lost their money or just moved a lesson.

TRY THIS

- ✓ Write a clear **makeup policy**: how much notice, how many makeups per term and when they expire.
- ✓ Let families **book makeups themselves** from open slots, so you're not the go-between.
- ✓ Run **holiday workshops**, so students keep playing when the routine breaks.

6

Keep practice going between lessons

Progress happens at home, not just in the lesson. A student who practises three times a week stays. One who doesn't usually leaves.

TRY THIS

- ✓ Set **one small practice task** after every lesson, like "Für Elise, bars 1-16, 5 days this week".
- ✓ Let students **tick it off at home** in the app, so you can see who practised.
- ✓ **Notice and praise** practice, not just results. A quick "great week of practice" goes a long way.

Watch your waitlist: popular after-school times fill first. A long waitlist for 4 pm is a sign to add a teacher or move adult students to daytime slots.

7

Act on three quiet weeks

Students rarely announce they're quitting. Missed lessons and no practice come first. If either goes quiet for three weeks, they are already drifting.

TRY THIS

- ✓ Check each week for **students with missed lessons or no practice** in three weeks.
- ✓ Send a **personal message to the parent**, not a promotion: "We've missed Lucas this month."
- ✓ Offer an **easy way back**: a new piece they love, a duet or a spot in the next recital.

8

Re-enrol before the term ends

The end of term is when parents decide. Make carrying on the easy option, before the decision even comes up.

TRY THIS

- ✓ Open **re-enrolment 3–4 weeks** before the term ends, and hold current students' times.
- ✓ Make it **one tap** for parents to keep the same time and teacher.
- ✓ Ask anyone who stops **one question**: "What's the main reason?" Patterns tell you what to fix.

Make staying the default: when re-enrolling takes one tap and leaving takes a decision, more families stay. Automatic term billing does 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 the trial lesson

HABIT 1

Hi **parent** , **name** did brilliantly today! I've held **day, time** for weekly lessons with **teacher** .
Confirm here and you're all set for term: **link** .

Practice this week

HABIT 6

Great lesson today, **name** ! This week: **task** , 10 minutes a day. Tick it off in the app when you're done. See you **day** !

Lesson cancelled

HABIT 5

Hi **parent** , **teacher** is unwell today, so **name** 's **time** lesson won't go ahead. Pick a makeup time that suits you here: **link** . Sorry for the short notice.

Ready for the exam

HABIT 3

Hi **parent** , **name** has hit every goal for **grade** . We'd love to enter them for the **exam date** exam. Reply yes and we'll take care of the entry.

After three quiet weeks

HABIT 7

Hi **parent** , we've missed **name** the last few weeks! Hope all is well. Is there anything we can change to make lessons easier? Just reply and we'll sort it.

Re-enrolment

HABIT 8

Hi **parent** , next term starts **date** . We've held **name** 's **day, time** with **teacher** . Keep the same time in one tap here: **link** .

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

Know your retention rate

Music schools run in terms, so measure it each term, and keep an eye on it monthly. It takes two minutes and tells you whether your new habits are working.

$$\frac{\text{Students who played last month and this month}}{\text{Students who played last month}} \times 100 = \text{Retention rate}$$

Example: 220 students were enrolled in Term 3. 196 of them re-enrolled for Term 4. That's $196 \div 220 \times 100 = 89\%$ retention. You kept 196 of last term's 220 students.

Your monthly scorecard

Fill it in at the start of each month. Splitting by level shows you exactly where students are leaking out.

Measure	How to work it out	Month 1	Month 2
Retention rate	Use the formula above		
Trials that enrolled	Trial lessons that turned into a term		
Practice logged	Students who logged practice 3+ times this week		
Studio use	Teaching hours booked ÷ hours available		
Quiet students	Students with missed lessons or no practice in 3 weeks		
Makeups used	Makeups booked ÷ lessons missed		
Top reason for leaving	From your one-question exit check		

Watch the trend, not one number. If most of your losses are students in their first term, that's where to put your effort next month.

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 you run your school.

WEEK 1

See where you stand

- ☐ Work out last term's retention rate
- ☐ List the last five students who stopped, and at which moment
- ☐ Give every student a grade or level

WEEK 2

Fix the first term

- ☐ Offer a regular time at every trial
- ☐ Send the welcome note to every new family
- ☐ Set one practice task after every lesson

WEEK 3

Level up the playing

- ☐ Set two or three goals for every student
- ☐ Book this term's recital date
- ☐ Message every family with three quiet weeks

WEEK 4

Lock in next term

- ☐ Write your makeup and notice policies
- ☐ Open re-enrolment early and hold times
- ☐ Start an ensemble and add your exit question

Tip: put a recurring 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.

Students grouped by grade

Record exam grades or your own levels, and group students in one click.

Goals for every student

Goals from music templates, with progress parents can see in the app.

Practice between lessons

Set practice tasks students tick off at home.

Quiet students flagged

See who has missed lessons or stopped practising, and follow up.

Makeups handled

Families book makeups themselves, and credits are tracked for you.

Easy re-enrolment

Term billing, reminders and re-enrolment in one tap.

Turn new students into regulars

Outcoach brings private lessons, group classes, ensembles, exams, recitals 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.