

FREE PLAYBOOK FOR TENNIS COACHES



Keep them on court.

How to keep players from their first rally to high performance. The 6 moments players quit, 8 habits that keep them, and messages you can send today.

6

moments tennis players are most likely to quit

8

habits that keep players booking lesson after lesson

6

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

• WHY THIS MATTERS

One junior who stays is worth years of lessons.

Most tennis programmes put their energy into finding new players. The faster way to grow is to keep the ones you already have, from Red Ball all the way up.

\$1,200

**One player, one group lesson a week,
for a year**

1 group lesson a week at **\$30**
× **40 weeks** of coaching in a year
= **\$1,200 a year** from one player

\$7,200+

The same player from age 6 to 12

Six years of weekly lessons, before you count privates, camps, holiday clinics, court hire or the younger sibling who follows them in. Lose them at Orange Ball and all of that walks away.

Replacing a player means ads, free trials and hoping the family sticks. Keeping one means a few well-timed messages, a clear goal and a smooth move from one ball stage to the next.

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

Where a player's value really comes from

Weekly lessons

The steady base: group or private lessons booked block after block.

Extras

Privates, holiday camps, match play days and court hire from players who already love it.

Word of mouth

Siblings, school friends and parents who join adult clinics. Happy families bring others.

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

The 6 moments tennis players are most likely to quit

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

WEEKS 1–6

1

“I can’t even hit it over”

Beginners who can’t rally yet don’t have fun yet. If the first lessons are mostly picking up balls, parents quietly decide it isn’t for them.

Do this: get every beginner rallying in lesson one.

MOVING UP A BALL

2

The bigger court, faster ball

Red to Orange and Orange to Green feel like starting again. Players who were the best in their group suddenly miss a lot, and confidence drops.

Do this: prepare players and parents before the move.

STUCK ON A LEVEL

3

“All my friends moved up”

Staying in the same group too long, or watching friends move on, makes lessons feel like they’re going nowhere.

Do this: give every player a visible next goal.

FIRST MATCHES

4

Losing the first few

Early matches are tough. A string of losses with no one helping the player make sense of it can turn tennis into something they dread.

Do this: set goals about how they play, not the score.

RAIN AND MISSED LESSONS

5

The routine breaks

A rained-out week, a holiday, then a sick week. Each missed lesson makes the next one easier to skip.

Do this: turn every cancellation into a makeup.

BETWEEN BLOCKS

6

The rebooking gap

This is when families actively decide. If rebooking takes effort or the time slot changes, many simply don’t come back. Teens are most at risk.

Do this: rebook before the current block ends.

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

Habits that keep players booking lesson after lesson

1

Make the first lesson a rally

Tennis is fun once you can rally. Get new players there in the first lesson, and parents see their child enjoying it straight away.

TRY THIS

- ✓ Start beginners on the **right ball and court size** for their age and level, even adults. Slower balls mean longer rallies.
- ✓ Group by **ability, not just age**, so no one is left watching from the baseline.
- ✓ Send a **welcome message before lesson one**: court number, what to bring, the coach's name. Then check in after week one.

2

Give every player a goal they can see

Parents keep paying for progress they can see. "Working on the backhand" is vague. "Rally 10 backhands cross-court" is something a child can chase and a parent can cheer.

TRY THIS

- ✓ Set **two or three goals per player**, written so a parent understands them. Use the goal bank on the next page.
- ✓ **Test the same skills the same way** every 6–8 weeks, so improvement shows up as a number.
- ✓ Share a **two-line progress update** with parents after each test, not just at the end of the year.

Ready-made goals for every ball stage

Pick two or three per player and adjust the numbers to suit them. They follow the red, orange and green ball stages used by most national programmes, so they work wherever you coach. These are examples to adapt, not official standards.

Stage	Rally	Serve	Movement and match play
 Red Ball	Rally 5 in a row with the coach over the net	Serve 3 of 5 into the box, underarm or overarm	Ready position and recovery to the middle; play points to 7 and keep score
 Orange Ball	Rally 10 cross-court from the baseline	Overarm serve, 5 of 10 in	Split step on every shot; play a full tiebreak and call their own lines
 Green Ball	Rally 15 with every ball past the service line	First serve 6 of 10 in; second serve with spin 7 of 10	Recover after wide balls; play a full set with fair line calls
 Yellow Ball & performance	Rally 20 with a change of direction on call	Hit 6 of 10 serves to a chosen target, wide or T	Track first-serve % and unforced errors; follow a simple match plan
 Adults	Rally 10 at a steady pace with a partner	Reliable second serve, 7 of 10 in	Play doubles positions correctly; finish a social match without help

Before you move a player up, check four things

Consistency

They hit the rally and serve goals for their stage on most attempts, not just once.

Confidence

They enjoy match play at their level and want more of a challenge.

Attendance

They come regularly. A player who misses a lot will struggle more after the move.

The fourth check is the parent. Tell them the move is coming, why, and that the first few weeks on the new ball will feel harder. A parent who expects the dip won't panic when it happens.

3

Plan every move up a ball

Moving up is a big win and a big risk. The court gets bigger, the ball gets faster, and a confident player can suddenly feel like a beginner again.

TRY THIS

- ✓ Move players up **in pairs or small groups** where you can, so no one arrives alone.
- ✓ Run a few **bridge lessons**: half the lesson on the new ball, half on the old one, before the full switch.
- ✓ Set an **easy first goal on the new ball** so they get a quick win in the first week.

4

Celebrate wins out loud

Players stay where they feel noticed. A move-up, a first full rally or a first match win deserves a moment, and parents love something to share.

TRY THIS

- ✓ Mark every **move-up with a certificate or a photo** on court, shared with the parent the same day.
- ✓ Give **shout-outs for effort and improvement**, not just for the most talented player.
- ✓ Keep a **running record of achievements** parents can see whenever they like.

Keep it specific: “Mia landed 7 of 10 first serves today, up from 4” means more to a parent than a long, general report. Specific beats long, every time.

5

Make the first matches about how they play

Most juniors lose a lot of their early matches. If the only measure is the score, tennis starts to feel like failing in public. Give them something they can win every time.

TRY THIS

- ✓ Start with **practice matches and team events** inside your programme before outside competition.
- ✓ Set **process goals** for each match: “Split step on every return” or “Get 6 of 10 first serves in.”
- ✓ After each match, share **one thing that went well and one thing to work on**. Nothing more.

6

Turn rain into a makeup, not a missed week

Tennis is an outdoor sport, so weather will cancel lessons. What matters is whether families feel they lost money or just moved a lesson.

TRY THIS

- ✓ Write a **clear wet-weather policy**: who decides, by what time, and how families hear about it.
- ✓ Give an **automatic makeup credit** for every cancelled lesson, with a clear time to use it by.
- ✓ Let families **book makeups themselves** into any lesson at their level with a spare spot.

Same rule for heat: if you coach somewhere hot, add a heat policy with a clear cut-off. Families trust a programme that makes the call early and tells everyone at once.

7

Act on two missed lessons within 48 hours

One missed lesson is life. Two in a row is a pattern. A quick, kind message brings far more players back than waiting until rebooking time.

TRY THIS

- ✓ **Mark attendance every lesson**, so you see patterns instead of finding out when someone doesn't rebook.
- ✓ After **two misses in a row**, send a personal message within two days. No guilt, just "we've missed them".
- ✓ Offer an **easy way back**: a makeup spot this week, or a quick catch-up with the coach.

8

Rebook before the block ends

Many families who don't come back never decided to leave. They just didn't get around to rebooking, or their slot changed. Make staying the easy option.

TRY THIS

- ✓ **Open rebooking 2–3 weeks early**, while players are still enjoying their lessons.
- ✓ Keep the **same day, time and coach** where you can, and hold their spot until a set date.
- ✓ Send **one link to book and pay**. Then ask anyone who leaves one question: "What's the main reason?"

Make staying the default: when rebooking takes one tap and leaving takes a decision, more families stay. Every step you remove keeps a few more players.

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.

Before the first lesson

HABIT 1

Hi **parent**, we're so glad **player** is joining us! First lesson is **day, time** on **court**. Bring a water bottle and sports shoes, and we'll have a racquet if needed. Their coach is **coach**. Any questions, just reply here.

Rained out

HABIT 6

Hi everyone, today's **lesson** at **time** is cancelled due to rain. Each player has a makeup credit to use by **date**. Book any **level** lesson with a free spot here: **link**. See you on court soon!

After two missed lessons

HABIT 7

Hi **parent**, we've missed **player** the last couple of weeks! Hope all is well. They're welcome to use a makeup spot on **day, time** to catch up. Just let me know.

Ready to move up

HABIT 3

Great news: **player** has hit the goals for **current ball**, and we'd like to move them to **next ball** from **date**. The first few weeks will feel harder, which is normal. They're ready for it!

After a match

HABIT 5

Hi **parent**, proud of **player** today. What went well: **one specific thing**. Next thing we'll work on: **one specific thing**. Whatever the score, that's real progress.

Rebook before the block ends

HABIT 8

Hi **parent**, the next block starts **date** and we'd love to keep **player** in **lesson, day, time** with **coach**. Confirm and pay here: **link**. We're holding the spot until **date**.

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

Know your retention rate

Work it out at the end of every block. It takes two minutes and tells you whether your new habits are working.

$$\frac{\text{Players at end of block} - \text{new players who joined}}{\text{Players at start of block}} \times 100 = \text{Retention rate}$$

Example: you start a block with 120 players. 18 new players join and you finish with 126. That's $(126 - 18) \div 120 \times 100 = 90\%$ retention. You kept 108 of the 120 players you started with.

Your block scorecard

Fill it in at the end of each block. Splitting by stage shows you exactly where players are leaking out.

Measure	How to work it out	Block 1	Block 2
Retention rate	Use the formula above		
Players who left, by stage	Red, Orange, Green, Yellow, adults, privates		
Average attendance	Lessons attended ÷ lessons booked		
Players moved up	Count of move-ups this block		
Makeups used	Makeup credits used ÷ credits given		
Rebooked early	Families who rebooked before the block ended		
Top reason for leaving	From your one-question exit check		

Watch the trend, not one number. If most of your losses sit in one stage, say just after the move to Green Ball, that's where to put your effort next block.

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 programme.

WEEK 1

See where you stand

- ☐ Work out your retention rate for the last block
- ☐ List the last five players who stopped, and at which moment
- ☐ Start marking attendance every lesson

WEEK 2

Set goals

- ☐ Pick two or three goals per player from the goal bank
- ☐ Test those skills and write down the starting numbers
- ☐ Send the welcome message to every new family

WEEK 3

Show progress

- ☐ Send a two-line progress update to every parent
- ☐ Message anyone who's missed two lessons in a row
- ☐ Write your wet-weather and makeup policy

WEEK 4

Lock in the next block

- ☐ Plan the next round of move-ups and tell parents
- ☐ Open rebooking early with one link to book and pay
- ☐ Add your one-question exit check

Tip: put a recurring reminder in your calendar for the last week of every block 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.

Goals for every player

Goals, skill tests and benchmarks for each ball stage, shown to parents as they're updated.

Ready to move up

See which players meet the benchmarks for the next ball at a glance.

Missed lessons flagged

Attendance in a tap. Players at risk of leaving are flagged early.

Rain-outs handled

Cancel a session and players get a makeup credit to rebook themselves.

Messages in one place

SMS, email and in-app messages to one family or a whole group.

Easy rebooking

Your own booking page, with payment taken when families book.

Keep more players on court

Outcoach brings bookings, payments, makeups and player progress for private, semi-private, group and high-performance lessons 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.