

Friends, Fun, Flexibility & Belonging.

Four key ingredients for positive netball experiences.

The Netball Australia Player Retention Research found that positive experiences are central to encouraging players to remain involved in netball. While individual circumstances and motivations differ, four themes consistently emerged as important to the player experience: Friends, Fun, Flexibility and Belonging.

These four areas provide a simple way for Clubs and Associations to think about their experience they are creating and identify practical opportunities to support player retention.

It's the people that matter the most.

FRIENDS: CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONNECTION

For many players, netball is about more than playing the game. Friendships, teammates and social connection can be an important part of why people enjoy netball and choose to continue.

Clubs can support connection by creating opportunities for players to develop friendships and feel connected to their team and wider club.

What can Clubs do?

- Welcome new players and help them connect with teammates
- Create opportunities for players to socialise on and off the court
- Encourage positive and inclusive team cultures
- Connect new and existing players
- Create opportunities for players to participate together outside of regular games
- Build a club culture where everyone feels part of the team

Ask your Club: Do our players have opportunities to build friendships and feel connected?

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FUN: CREATE ENJOYABLE EXPERIENCES

Enjoyment is an important part of a positive netball experience. Players are more likely to want to continue when they enjoy playing, feel supported and have positive experiences with their team and club.

Fun doesn't mean the competition or development aren't important. It means creating an environment where players can enjoy the game, develop their skills and feel positive about their participation.

What can Clubs do?

- Create positive and encouraging team environments
- Recognise effort, improvement and contribution
- Encourage coaches to use positive communication
- Provide opportunities for players to develop their skills
- Celebrate achievements across all levels of participation
- Ask players what they enjoy about their experience
- Respond to feedback about things that may be affecting enjoyment

Ask your Club: Are our players enjoying their netball experience?

FLEXIBILITY: PROVIDE OPTIONS THAT FIT CHANGING LIVES

Players' circumstances, commitments and motivations can change throughout their netball journey.

Study, work, family commitments, changing interests and other priorities can affect a person's ability to participate in traditional netball competitions.

Providing flexible participation options can help people remain connected to netball when their circumstances change.

What can Clubs do?

- Offer social or recreational participation options where possible
- Consider shorter season or alternative competition formats
- Provide different ways for people to remain involved
- Support players to move between participation options
- Consider flexible training arrangements where practical
- Communicate the different participation opportunities available

Ask your Club: If a player can't continue in their current format, do we have another way for them to stay involved?

BELONGING: CREATE A PLACE WHERE EVERYONE FEELS WELCOME

Players want to feel that they belong.

A welcoming and inclusive environment helps participants feel valued, connected and comfortable being part of the club.

Clubs can strengthen belonging by making sure new and existing participants feel included and have opportunities to contribute to the club community.

What can Clubs do?

- Create a welcoming experience for new players and families
- Make inclusion part of everyday club culture
- Challenge behaviours that make people feel excluded
- Encourage positive relationships between players, coaches and volunteers
- Recognise and value the contribution of participants and families
- Create opportunities for everyone to be involved beyond playing
- Provide clear and respectful communication

Ask your Club: Would our players say they feel welcomed, valued and included?

PUTTING THE FOUR TOGETHER

The four themes are connected.

- Friends – Players feel connected to others
- Fun – Players enjoy their experiences
- Flexibility – Players can participate in ways that fit their lives
- Belonging – Players feel welcomed, valued and part of the club

Together, these can help create positive experiences that encourages players to remain connected to netball.



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A SIMPLE CLUB CHECK

Use these questions to reflect on your current player experience.

- Friends – Do players have opportunities to build friendships and connections?
- Fun – Are players enjoying their experience?
- Flexibility – Can players participate in ways that suit their changing circumstances?
- Belonging – Do players feel welcomed, valued and included?

TURN THE FOUR THEMES INTO ACTION

You don't need to address everything at once. Choose one area that could make the biggest difference for your players.

For example:

- Our Priority – Belonging
- Our Goal – Improve how welcomed and connected new players feel
- Our Actions – Introduce a new player welcome process, connect new players with a teammate or buddy and check in with new players mid-season
- How we'll know if it worked – Ask players about their experience through a short Player Experience Check In

KEY TAKEAWAY

Friends, Fun, Flexibility and Belonging provide a simple way to think about the player experience. By creating opportunities for connection, enjoyment, flexible participation and belonging, Clubs and Associations can create positive experiences that encourage more people to stay involved in netball.