

Setting Player Retention Goals.



Player retention starts with creating an environment where people want to keep playing.

The Netball Australia Player Retention Research found that positive experiences, friendships, fun, flexibility, belonging and quality coaching all contribute to players remaining involved in netball. Clubs and Associations have an important role to play through the experiences, environments and opportunities they create.

Setting a retention goal gives your organisation a clear focus and helps turn what you know about your players into practical action.

You don't need a complicated retention strategy. Start small, focus on one priority, take 2 to 3 practical actions and check whether are making a difference.

WHY SET A RETENTION GOAL?

A retention goal can help your Club or Association:

- Understand how well you are retaining players
- Identify age groups or transition points where players are leaving
- Understand what players and families value about their experience
- Identify opportunities to improve the player experience
- Focus your efforts on one or two priorities
- Monitor whether your actions are making a difference
- Build retention into your annual planning and decision making

Remember – Retention is not just a player issue. The structures, cultures and experiences created by Clubs and Associations can influence whether players remain involved.

START BY UNDERSTANDING YOUR PLAYERS

Before setting a goal, look at what is happening in your Club or Association.

Ask:

- Who is returning each season?
- Who is leaving?
- Are there particular age groups where players are leaving?
- Are players leaving at a particular transition point?
- What are players and families saying about their experiences?
- Are there barriers preventing players from continuing?

You may already have useful information through registration data, team lists, player conversation, surveys and feedback from families and coaches. You don't need perfect data, start with what you know.

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CHOOSE ONE RETENTION PRIORITY

Choose an area where your Club or Association can realistically make a difference.

For example:

- Supporting junior players to transition into senior netball
- Supporting players aged 15 to 19 to remain involved
- Improving team culture, friendships and connection
- Helping new players feel welcome
- Improving player enjoyment
- Providing more flexible participation options
- Strengthening communication with families
- Encouraging former players to return

Ask – Where could we make the biggest difference to keeping players involved?

SET AN ACHIEVABLE GOAL

The goal should be simple, realistic and relevant to your Club.

Where possible, include a measure or target so you can see whether you are making progress.

Examples:

- Keeping more junior players as they move into senior netball
- Supporting players aged 15-19 to stay involved
- Improving team culture and friendships
- Helping new players feel welcome
- Making participation more flexible
- Encouraging players who have left to return

Tip – You don't have to set a percentage target. A goal such as "improve how welcomed new players feel" is also useful starting point.

RETENTION GOAL EXAMPLES: FROM GOAL TO ACTION

Example 1: Support Players Through Key Transitions

- Retention Priority – Junior to Senior Transition
- Example Goal – Increase the number of players who continue from junior into senior netball next season
- Practical Actions – Create a junior to senior transition program, introduce junior players to senior teams before the season ends, promote social senior participation options and provide clear information about senior pathways and expectations
- Success Measure – More players register in a senior team the following season and players report feeling confident about the transition

Example 2: Strengthen Belonging

- Retention Priority – Belonging & Club Connection
- Example Goal – Improve players' sense of belonging and connection across the club this season
- Practical Actions – Welcome new players and families, introduce a buddy system for new participants, hold team and club social events and recognise player achievements and contributions
- Success Measure – Players report feeling welcomed and included and increased participation in club activities

Example 3: Improve the Player Experience

- Retention Priority – Fun & Enjoyment
- Example Goal – Increase player enjoyment throughout the season
- Practical Actions – Complete a mid-season Player Experience Check-In, celebrate effort, improvement and teamwork, include fun team building activities and respond to player feedback during the season
- Success Measure – More players say they enjoy playing at the club and more players indicate they want to return next season

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Example 4: Support Flexible Participation

- Retention Priority – Flexibility
- Example Goal – Provide participation options that better suit players with changing commitments
- Practical Actions – Offer shorter or social teams and competitions, provide flexible training options where possible, promote different participation pathways and support movement between competitive and social formats
- Success Measure – Players continue participating through an alternative format
- Reduced dropout due to time commitments

Example 5: Strengthen Coach Impact

- Retention Priority – Positive Coaching
- Example Goal – Strengthen coaching practices that support positive player experiences
- Practical Actions – Provide coaches with retention and inclusion resources, encourage positive communication and feedback, promote player-centric coaching approach and ask players about their coaching experience
- Success Measure – Players report feeling supported and encouraged by coaches and improved player satisfaction with coaching

Example 6: Improve Communication with Families

- Retention Priority – Family Engagement
- Example Goal – Improve communication and connection with families across the season
- Practical Actions – Share clear season information and key dates, explain grading and team selection processes, invite families to club events and volunteer opportunities and collect family feedback during the season
- Success Measure – Families report improved communication and increased family engagement with the club

Example 7: Re-engage Former Players

- Retention Priority – Re-engagement
- Example Goal – Encourage former players to reconnect with the club
- Practical Actions – Contact former players before registrations open, promote flexible participation opportunities, invite former players to social events or volunteer roles and ask what opportunities would encourage them to return
- Success Measure – Former players return to play, coach, umpire or volunteer and increased engagement from past participants

CHOOSING THE RIGHT GOAL FOR YOUR CLUB

Use these questions to help identify your priority

If your Club is noticing:	Consider this Retention Goal:
Players leaving after junior netball	Improve junior to senior transition
New players don't return	Strengthen welcoming and belonging
Players say netball isn't as enjoyable	Improve player enjoyment and team culture
Players struggle with time commitments	Provide flexible participation options
Families are confused about club decisions	Improve communication and transparency
Players leave after one season	Increase return rate for second season players
Former players disappear from the club	Develop a re-engagement approach

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CHECK IF IT'S WORKING

You don't need complicated reporting. At the end of the season, ask:

- Did more players stay? Look at your registrations or team numbers
- Did players enjoy their experience? Ask players a few simple questions e.g. Did you enjoy playing this season? Did you feel connected to your team? Would you like to play again next season?
- What did we learn? Talk to coaches, players and families about what worked and what could be improved.

Use those insights to determine what to focus on next season.

A SIMPLE RETENTION PLAN

Utilise the below approach to get started.

Our Retention Priority

We want to improve:

Our Goal

By the end of the season, we want to:

Our Actions:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How we will know if it worked:

We will look at:

When will we check?

KEEP IT SIMPLE

You don't need to do everything.

- Look – Understand where players are leaving
- Choose – Pick one retention priority
- Act – Take 2-3 practical actions
- Check – See what changed and ask players what they think
- Improve – Keep what worked and change what didn't

KEY TAKEAWAY

Retention goals don't need to be complicated. Start with what you know, choose one priority and take practical action. By focusing on Friends, Fun, Flexibility and Belonging, Clubs and Associations can make meaningful improvements to the player experience and create environments that encourage people to stay involved in netball.