

The ASA Guide to Supporting Your Volunteers

Most of us like to feel like we're part of something and volunteers are no exception: the better they are treated, the better they will feel about donating their time to your club. We've put together some useful information to help you make sure your volunteers arrive and leave with smiles on their faces!

What motivates volunteers?

- Learning new skills
- Putting existing skills to good use
- Being able to 'give back' to their club and wider community
- Having fun
- Gaining 'work' experience
- Feeling useful
- Making new friends

Remember too that motivations can change over time, a person may start volunteering to improve their CV, but decide to stay because they enjoy the company of the people they work with. By communicating regularly with your volunteers, you can keep track of their motivations, and if possible adapt their role to continue to meet them.

Reward and Recognition

Volunteers need to feel that they are an important part of your club. They should be involved in decision making, and their achievements should be recognised.

There are so many ways to reward volunteers; certificates, parties and gifts are great ways to make volunteers feel valued. But more important than the big gestures, are the everyday things you do to let volunteers know they are important. A simple 'thank you' goes a long way. Different people value different forms of recognition, so here are some suggestions to show your volunteers how much your club appreciates them.

Formal

- Provide each volunteer with a clear role description for the role they will be doing, which covers what is expected, who to go to for help, and any other relevant information

- Ensure new volunteers have an induction to the club and their role – obtain expectations from both sides and allow for questions to be asked
- Assign mentors or ‘buddies’ to new volunteers so that they have a designated ‘go-to’ person for help, or appoint a Volunteer Co-ordinator
- Run volunteer events such as a ‘thank you event’ as part of Volunteers’ Week – this could be anything from bowling to a meal out to a game of cricket or rounders
- Certificates - could be an annual ‘thank you’, or after a fixed term, such as completion of a specific number of volunteering hours
- Make volunteers aware of available training and qualifications which would be suitable for them, and if the club is not in a position to be able to cover costs ensure the volunteers are made aware of available funding options for these
- Include volunteers in decisions that affect them - invite them to meetings or working groups or request feedback on future plans

Informal

- Say ‘thank you!’
- Make sure volunteers have enough tasks to keep them engaged
- Where possible try to ensure they are given work relevant to their skills and interests
- Include them in social events - going out for lunch etc.
- Include volunteers on informal matters, such as where a new notice board should go etc.
- Complete a ‘debrief’ at the end of an event so volunteers feel part of a team

To get you started we’ve included a certificate for you to say ‘thank you!’ This can be given to anyone at your club, from anyone at your club, for any reason. It can be awarded quietly, at a presentation, during the ‘debrief’ of an event or displayed on your club notice board or website.

The above suggestions are just a few ideas to get you started, for even more inspiration on "[Saying 'Thank You' to Volunteers](#)" visit Volunteering England.

Training

One of the best ways to make volunteers feel valued is by offering training, and there are a number of options open to you when you give your time freely. The right training is not only great for the confidence of your volunteers; it's the best way to ensure you have the right skills in place for your club. Visit swimming.org and check out what we offer:

- [Team Manager Training](#)
- [Club Leaders Seminars](#)
- [Young Aquatic Leader Certificate](#)
- [Club Captain Resource](#)
- [Workforce-Co-ordinator Guide](#)

Why not encourage your volunteers to take a look around our website for themselves to find the right training for them; they might be surprised at the skills they could gain! Should you not find the answer that you are looking for, get in touch with us at volunteering@swimming.org

Support and Supervision

On a final note, it's so important to make sure volunteers have good quality feedback and support. If volunteers do have concerns, it's better that they have the opportunity to express them, rather than bottling them up until it's too late and they've decided to leave. Proper support and supervision will help you stay in touch with how your volunteers are feeling in general. The sooner you know about problems they may be having, the earlier you can work towards a solution.

Dedicating time to support and recognise the hard work of your volunteers will boost their enthusiasm for the sport and ensure the long-term sustainability of your club.