

VOLUNTEERS MAKE ORIENTEERING HAPPEN



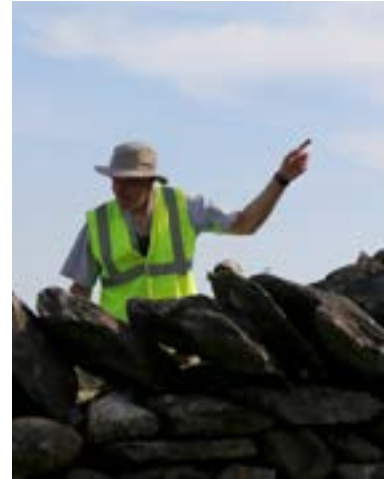
**YOUR CLUB'S GUIDE TO RECRUITING,
SUPPORTING, INVOLVING AND
CELEBRATING VOLUNTEERS**

Every successful orienteering event, training session and club activity has something in common: amazing volunteers working behind the scenes.

From the planner creating challenging courses and the mapper exploring new terrain, to the friendly face welcoming newcomers at registration, volunteers are at the heart of our sport.

But finding volunteers, keeping them motivated and ensuring that responsibilities are shared fairly can sometimes be challenging.

THE GOOD NEWS? YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO IT ALONE!



Whether your club is looking for new helpers, supporting long-standing volunteers or encouraging the next generation to get involved, there are plenty of simple steps you can take and free resources available to help.

This guide explores four important areas:

RECRUIT

- Find new people and make it easy to get involved.
- Help potential volunteers discover opportunities that suit them.

RETAIN

- Create enjoyable, rewarding volunteering experiences.
- Help people feel welcomed, supported and valued.

DEPLOY

- Match people to roles and share the workload.
- Make volunteering organised, manageable and rewarding.

REWARD

- Say thank you and celebrate contributions.
- Recognise the difference every volunteer makes.

RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS: MAKE IT EASIER TO SAY YES!

Sometimes the biggest barrier to volunteering is simply not knowing how to get involved.

People may assume they need years of orienteering experience, specialist skills or lots of spare time. In reality, clubs need people with all kinds of skills, backgrounds and availability.

SIMPLE IDEAS TO TRY

- Just ask! A friendly, personal invitation can be more effective than a general appeal for helpers.
- Start small. Offer opportunities requiring just 30 minutes or an hour, rather than asking for a major commitment.
- Be specific. Instead of "We need volunteers", try "Could you help welcome newcomers at our next event for an hour?"
- Look beyond your existing members. Parents, students, local community groups and people new to orienteering may have valuable skills.
- Promote the benefits. Volunteering offers opportunities to make friends, develop skills, spend time outdoors and contribute to the community.
- Make opportunities accessible. Offer different types of tasks, including roles that can be completed from home or without travelling to an event.



MAKE YOUR OPPORTUNITIES WELCOMING

Not every volunteer needs to be an experienced orienteer. Clubs can offer a range of roles depending on confidence, interests and availability.

Getting started	Getting more involved
Helping at registration	Event organising
Welcoming newcomers	Course planning
Supporting a string course	Coaching
Helping at the finish	Mapping
Event photography or publicity	Committee roles
Social media support	Volunteer coordination

USEFUL RESOURCE

[Buddle – Finding volunteers](#) offers free guidance on reaching new audiences, attracting helpers and creating effective recruitment messages.

RETAINING VOLUNTEERS

HELP PEOPLE FEEL A PART OF THE TEAM

Recruiting someone is just the beginning. Giving volunteers a positive experience is what encourages them to stay.

People are more likely to continue helping when they enjoy what they're doing, understand how their contribution makes a difference and feel appreciated.



SIMPLE IDEAS TO TRY

- Give everyone a warm welcome. Introduce new volunteers to club members and explain how things work.
- Use a buddy system. Pair new volunteers with experienced helpers for their first event or activity.
- Check in regularly. Ask what's going well and whether there is anything they would like to change.
- Respect people's time. Avoid assuming that someone who helps once can always help.
- Offer variety. Encourage volunteers to try different roles or build new skills.
- Create opportunities to connect. Informal chats, club socials and post-event gatherings help strengthen relationships.

WATCH OUT FOR VOLUNTEER BURNOUT

In many clubs, a small number of dedicated people take on a large proportion of the work.

If this sounds familiar, consider how tasks could be broken down into smaller roles, responsibilities rotated or experienced volunteers given additional support.

Remember: a sustainable club is one where volunteering is shared and enjoyed, not carried by the same few people.

USEFUL RESOURCE

[Buddle – Creating meaningful volunteer experiences](#) provides practical suggestions for understanding volunteers' motivations and making their experience positive.

DEPLOYING VOLUNTEERS: THE RIGHT PEOPLE IN THE RIGHT ROLES

Good volunteer coordination helps clubs run smoothly and gives people the confidence to contribute.

It's not about creating lots of paperwork. It's about making sure everyone knows what they're doing, feels supported and has the information they need.

SIMPLE IDEAS TO TRY

- Match roles to interests and skills. Some volunteers enjoy working with people, while others prefer practical, technical or administrative tasks.
- Explain what's involved. Give volunteers a clear description of the task, expected time commitment and who to contact.
- Plan ahead. Create a simple volunteer rota well before events.
- Share responsibilities. Encourage people to work in pairs and rotate roles where possible.
- Provide training and guidance. Make sure volunteers have the skills and confidence needed for their responsibilities.
- Have a backup plan. Avoid depending entirely on one person for an important task.

A LITTLE ORGANISATION MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE

A simple volunteer coordinator role can be hugely valuable, especially in larger clubs.

This could involve matching volunteers to opportunities, maintaining a rota, welcoming newcomers and helping club members find suitable training.

When allocating roles, remember that some responsibilities, particularly safeguarding, coaching and technical event roles, may require specific training, competence or checks. Clubs should follow current British Orienteering policies and requirements.



REWARDING VOLUNTEERS: A LITTLE THANK YOU GOES A LONG WAY

Volunteers don't give their time because they expect rewards, but everyone deserves to feel appreciated.

Recognition doesn't need to be expensive or formal. Often the most meaningful gesture is a genuine thank you that shows someone their contribution has been noticed.

SIMPLE IDEAS TO TRY

- Say thank you personally. A conversation, phone call or message can mean a great deal.
- Celebrate volunteers publicly. Feature their contributions in club newsletters, websites or social media, with their permission.
- Recognise different roles. Remember the people behind the scenes, not just those taking the lead.
- Mark special milestones. Celebrate long service, achievements or someone completing their first volunteering role.
- Offer development opportunities. Training, mentoring and new responsibilities can be valuable forms of recognition.
- Make use of awards. Nominate deserving volunteers for club, regional and national awards.



CELEBRATE YOUR CLUB'S UNSUNG HEROES

British Orienteering's annual awards recognise people who make an outstanding contribution to our sport, including those who give their time over many years.

Could there be someone in your club who deserves recognition?

USEFUL RESOURCE

[British Orienteering – Club, Coach and Volunteer Awards](#) explains the award categories and nomination process.

YOUR VOLUNTEER SUPPORT TOOLKIT:

USEFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES

There's lots of free, trusted support available to help your club develop its approach to volunteering. You don't need to create everything from scratch.



BUDDLE

- Club support and practical tools
- Free resources for community sports clubs, including recruiting volunteers, creating meaningful experiences, managing people and making clubs more sustainable.



NCVO

- Volunteer management guidance
- Practical advice on recruiting, welcoming, supporting and managing volunteers, including role descriptions, volunteer policies and expenses.



SPORT ENGLAND

- Volunteering research and advice
- Guidance on recruiting, safeguarding, supporting and recognising volunteers, alongside useful insights into what motivates people to get involved.



VOLUNTEER SCOTLAND

- Volunteering support in Scotland
- Advice, good-practice resources and support for organisations involving volunteers.



SPORT WALES

- Support for Welsh sports clubs
- Club development support and practical guidance on recruiting and retaining volunteers.



VOLUNTEER NOW

- Volunteer management in Northern Ireland
- A wide range of resources on recruitment, induction, safeguarding, volunteer involvement and recognition.

SMALL STEPS, BIG DIFFERENCE: YOUR CLUB'S VOLUNTEER CHECKLIST

You don't have to change everything at once. Why not choose two or three actions that could make volunteering easier and more enjoyable in your club?

YOUR CLUB PLAN IN ACTION:

- Ask existing volunteers what they enjoy and what could be improved.
- Identify two or three small tasks that new volunteers could try.
- Make sure every new volunteer has a friendly welcome and a clear contact.
- Review whether event and club responsibilities are shared fairly.
- Create opportunities for training, mentoring or trying new roles.
- Plan a simple way to thank and celebrate volunteers.
- Explore one of the free resources linked above.

TOGETHER, WE CAN MAKE VOLUNTEERING BETTER FOR EVERYONE

A thriving orienteering club isn't just about great maps, exciting courses and successful events. It's also about the people who make those experiences possible.

By welcoming new volunteers, supporting those already involved, sharing responsibilities and celebrating contributions, we can build stronger, more inclusive clubs for the future.

Because when volunteers feel supported and valued, everyone benefits.

For more information and guidance, visit the [British Orienteering volunteering page](#) or contact your club's committee to discuss how you can get involved.

