



Introduction

SEA member program squash practices often involve three to five students per court across four or more courts. With this number of courts and students, many of whom are beginner to intermediate level, programs need volunteers to ensure a smooth and effective practice. An ideal volunteer is both a great squash player and a great teacher who knows how to engage with our students. These ideal volunteers, however, are not always easy to find so we need to make the best use of the strengths of the volunteers we have.

Overview

This guide shares tips on how to use your squash volunteers most effectively.

- Actively Recruit Volunteers
- Coach Your Volunteers
- Know and Place Volunteers Effectively
- Direct and Monitor Volunteers
- Give Feedback to Volunteers

Actively Recruit Volunteers

SEA member programs need to actively recruit squash volunteers. Don't just wait for them to come to you. Below are some sources that SEA programs often use to find volunteers.

- Local squash clubs and fitness centers with squash courts
- Local college / university teams
- Local high schools with squash teams (to coach younger players)
- Board members and board member connections
- Young Professionals / Junior Boards
- High school players in your own program (to coach younger players)
- Program fundraising / friendraising events

Have appealing marketing materials ready to send to potential volunteers outlining the requested commitment, location, and benefits. Actively reach out to the communities listed above to solicit volunteers. For example, build relationships with local coaches (pros, college coaches, and high school coaches) and ask for their help in recruiting volunteers. College coaches might be willing to bring their entire team over for a day, or to invite your program to their practice; use these opportunities to push college players to consider volunteering more regularly with your organization. College coaches might also encourage their local alumni to get involved with your program.

If your program is in a small squash community, consider training non-squash players to help

on court. Find volunteers who can build great relationships with students, and then teach them the basics of squash. If their skills are not good enough, use the volunteers to hand feed, motivate players, or lead fitness activities.

Coach Your Volunteers

SEA coaches have to do more than just coach the players; they also must coach the volunteers. The first step toward having effective coaches is effectively training and coaching them.

Clinics: Lead coach clinics two to four times per year. At a minimum, lead one at the start of the season and one midway through the program year. Below is some content to cover during the training.

- ❑ Share your overall plan for the year
- ❑ Share your specific plan for the next several months more
- ❑ Model the concepts you will be teaching, and the key actions and phrases you will be looking for and saying (racquet up, shoulder positioning, wrist position, etc.)
- ❑ Show videos or photos of what it looks like when players do a skill correctly or incorrectly. Help volunteers see what you're looking for in student swings, body positioning, etc.
- ❑ Run through some of the drills you will be leading with students, and review the volunteer role during those drills
- ❑ Ask volunteers to do the drills on court with one another. If a volunteer is advanced, you can request that they use opposite hand.
- ❑ Let volunteers play with one another at the end of the clinic. They often enjoy the chance to get on court and play.

Check-ins: In addition to these clinics, check in with your coaches before and after practices. Also set aside several formal check-ins with them throughout the year. Ask them to come 20 minutes before or 20 minutes after practice to talk with you, and give them advance notice of what you'll be discussing. During the check-in, ask for their feedback and questions on how things are going, share feedback with them on how they're doing, and discuss upcoming plans.

Know and Place Volunteers Effectively

To use your volunteers most effectively, you need to know their strengths and weaknesses, and place them in groups where they can be most helpful to you.

- ❑ **One-on-one pre-screening:** Before accepting new volunteers, get on court with them one-on-one. Learn their strengths and weaknesses related to both their squash skills and their social skills, and ask about their preferences (helping with fitness, older vs younger students, etc.).
- ❑ **Observe coaches during practice:** As you observe practices, observe your volunteers as well as students to get a sense for how to use them most effectively. Are they good at

feeding? Are they great players but not strong at explaining? Do they have a passion for fitness? You want your volunteers to be comfortable and confident.

❑ **Place volunteers strategically.**

Below are a few tips and examples to consider when places volunteers strategically.

- ❑ Skilled squash players who don't have a passion for teaching can play games with your more advanced players. Less skilled players with high levels of enthusiasm can be helpful with fitness.
- ❑ Strong feeders are more important at the beginner level, where students are less able to adjust to imperfect feeds. Place your strongest feeders with your beginners, or have volunteers/students do hand feeds. With hand feeds, specify where on the wall the ball should be thrown and where it should land on court.
- ❑ Non-squash players who are motivated to learn and good at engaging the students can be effective volunteers. You can teach them the basics of squash and what they need to know for each day's session. Having a few key concepts and phrases for each practice that you share with students and volunteers will help volunteers know what to look for and say as they feed (ex: racquet up, shoulders square to the wall, etc.).

Direct and Monitor Volunteers

There are several things you can do during practice to support your volunteers.

- ❑ **Be clear about what the volunteers are doing.** At the start of practice, show coaches the practice plan and answer any questions they have. Be explicit about what their role is, and what you are looking to see from the students.
- ❑ **Keep explanations basic.** Choose one theme for the practice and two to three pointers. For example, the theme might be "Volleys" and the pointers might be "quick racquet prep, steady wrist, and keep a direct, horizontal line during swing.
- ❑ **Monitor the courts.** Constantly move between courts, jumping on and off to offer support and coaching.
- ❑ **Provide additional coaching.** The coach should come onto court to adjust drills as needed and offer more advanced, hands on and detailed coaching, either to individual students or to the group.
- ❑ **Use water break to check in with volunteers.**

Give Feedback to Volunteers

Own your practice. If a volunteer is not doing what you asked, or is not effective, it is your responsibility to address the situation. In many SEA programs, volunteers are donors or Board members, or even just players who are older than the coaches; in these circumstances, coaches may be hesitant to give feedback to their volunteers. If you are hesitant, talk with your Executive Director or Program Director about how to most effectively give feedback to

the volunteer, and practice ahead of time what you will say.

SEA Shared Drive Resources

- ❑ [SEA Best Practice Guide: Youth Contribution and Leadership](#) - A guide that contains information on how to train and support high school students to be coaches.
- ❑ [SEA Best Practice Guide: Volunteer Recruitment, Training, and Support](#) - A guide about general best practices for training and recruiting all volunteers (not just squash).

This guide was written by Iago Cornes at Urban Squash Cleveland, with support from the 2017-2018 Squash Leadership Committee.