Retaining members...

Once you’ve recruited new members, you need to keep them. Here are some ways to help ensure your members stay.

A good club programme
This is one of the most important ways of retaining members. The club should have a club programme secretary or committee responsible for the programme which is produced yearly or termly. However, all members should contribute to the planning for it to work and be a success. Make sure the programme is all-inclusive and affordable and that everyone has a copy. It is crucial that members are kept informed of arrangements. More information can be found in Section 1: You’ve got what it takes and Section 2: Get what you need and Section 4: The club mix.

Get everyone involved
Everyone needs to feel valued and the best way to do this is by making sure they’re involved. Every member is part of the team and has a role to play. A good team needs a mix of people. For example:

- Leaders who are good at motivating
- Creative types who generate ideas
- Extroverts who have good networks
- Dynamic individuals who thrive on pressure
- Analytical types who can evaluate the usefulness of ideas
- Cooperative team players
- Anyone with a specialist skill
- Hard workers that get things done.

The officers need to recognise the roles that all members play, even if they are not specific.

Keep members motivated
Motivated members generate enthusiasm, energy, commitment and inspiration. The club officers have an important role to play in keeping members motivated and can do so by:

- Being enthusiastic and supportive of members
- Being open to ideas from members
- Ensuring they are friendly and open to all
- Being tolerant and understanding to those in need of help
- Ensuring high standards are maintained and by setting a good example
- Knowing the team and what makes them tick
- Learning to delegate
- Never taking anyone for granted
- Remembering that you are responsible for club activities, so it’s essential that members support you.

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**Learn and achieve**
Members need a challenge and also gain sense of achievement when they have reached their goal. YFC provides members with the opportunity to learn and achieve through participating in the wide range of activities and programmes on offer such as the competitions programme, YFC Travel, training and development courses and by taking on responsibility for running the organisation at club, county and national levels. By participating in YFC, which offers members a chance to learn skills that will remain with them for life, members can reach their potential, which can then become the foundations of a future career.

**Communicate effectively**
There’s no point in organising the best programme ever if no one knows about it, so make sure everyone is communicating effectively. This is particularly important when retaining older members or those living away who might not be regular attendees. Communicate to members by:
- Giving members a hard copy of the club programme
- Sending texts to remind members of events and times
- Using social media sites to keep members informed of YFC business
- Creating a telephone tree where the chairman/woman phones the other officers who in turn each phone a group of members
- Sending emails to keep everyone informed of what is going on, as long as everyone checks their inbox regularly. Create an email distribution list of members, but make sure you keep those not on email up-dated too
- Including a diary dates page and bulletin board on the club website. Remember to update them regularly
- Producing a regular newsletter that includes what’s on and diary dates. You can also include the club’s successes, gossip and jokes and send the newsletter to members who’ve gone away to college or university to keep them involved, so that when they return they know what’s on and what they’ve missed out on
- Creating leaflets and posters to advertise forthcoming events
- Communicating face to face is always best if you need to explain anything.

**Make it fun**
Lastly, but most importantly, make it fun. Members will stay involved if it’s fun. If the club offers a range of exciting activities, where members get to meet new people across the county and have a great social life, it’s more likely that the club will hold on to its members.
Trouble shooting: why members choose to leave:

- **They are not aware of all the opportunities** – Ensure members get the full benefit of their membership by making them aware of all the opportunities that are available to them. These include the competitions programme, training events and YFC Travel as well as the opportunity to take part in various agricultural and rural issues events and discussion groups. There are also schemes available through other organisations that could be of benefit, such as the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award.

- **They don’t understand what’s being discussed** – Consider new members when you discuss any YFC matters as they may not understand what’s being talked about. Even for members who are not new, it’s important to ensure that they understand what is being discussed and feel able to ask if not.

- **They don’t understand the commitment involved** – YFCs require a level of commitment and the longer members are involved, the more responsibility they are likely to be asked to take on. When members are asked or volunteer to take on roles, make sure they know what’s involved. Don’t persuade them to take on a role under false pretences otherwise you may drive them away.

- **They haven’t been asked to take part** – Everyone has paid the same annual subscription, so everyone is entitled to the same opportunities or input. Ask everyone if they would like to participate in activities and competitions, even the quiet ones. Try to share out activities and if someone wants to take part, always try to include them.

- **They can’t afford the activities** – When putting together the club programme, consider cost. Young people who aren’t yet working don’t necessarily have the resources to pay for trips on a regular basis. Don’t exclude members by having too many expensive activities on the programme. For example, the club could discuss subsidising junior members for some activities.

- **They don’t feel part of the organisation** – Keep everyone informed about what’s happening. Call those who haven’t attended for a few weeks to find out why and let them know what is going on.

- **They aren’t valued or thanked** – All members should be valued, whatever their role. Be sure to recognise all members’ input, big or small.
Some more reasons why members choose to leave:

- **They aren’t sure of their role** – No one can be expected to carry out a role well if they don’t know what to do. New club officers will need support. If a club officer is given a task that they haven’t done before, they may need some guidance. Contact the club leader or county office to find out what support is available. Be aware that if a new club officer feels isolated in their role and doesn’t know who to ask for help, they may leave.

- **They are only given boring jobs** – Be conscious about who does what. Try to divide the jobs up evenly among members.

- **They haven’t received training to develop better skills** – Young people like a challenge and also the opportunity to learn new things. There are numerous training opportunities available at club, county and national level. Visit the NFYFC Skills and Training page for ideas.

- **They’ve fallen out with friends** – Some members may leave because they’ve fallen out with their friends or because a relationship ends. Try to discourage cliques, so when fallouts happen there are other people that the friends can talk to. Ensure people know who to talk to if they are having a problem.