

# THE MARTIAL ARTS CLUB GUIDE TO SUMMER RETENTION

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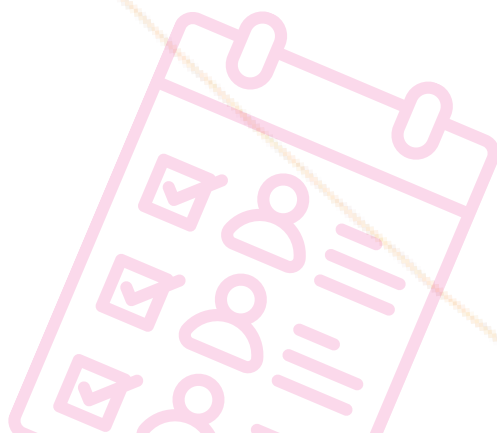
## HOW TO KEEP STUDENTS ENGAGED, PROTECT REVENUE AND BUILD MOMENTUM BEFORE SEPTEMBER

Summer can be a difficult time for Martial Arts clubs. As attendance becomes inconsistent, families go on holiday, therefore routines break. So the students disengage and before most clubs realise it, September arrives with:

- Increased cancellations
- Lower attendance
- Reduced momentum
- Pressure to rebuild numbers

But the clubs that grow consistently year after year approach summer differently. They don't see it as a *"quiet period"*. They see it as a retention and relationship-building opportunity.

This guide breaks down practical ways to improve student engagement, protect retention, and keep your club moving forward over summer.



## WHY SUMMER RETENTION MATTERS

Most clubs focus heavily on lead generation. But if students are quietly dropping out the back while new ones come in through the front, growth becomes incredibly difficult to sustain.

Retention is what creates:

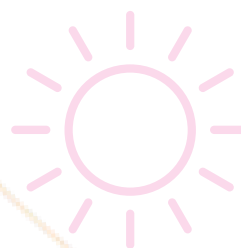
- Stable revenue
- Strong club culture
- Better class energy
- More referrals
- Long-term growth

The challenge is that students rarely leave suddenly. Most disengage gradually.

It starts the same as always, with missed sessions, falling out of routine, less communication with the club and therefore reduced motivation.

By the time cancellation happens, the disconnection has often been building for weeks.

**The goal is to spot and solve these issues early.**



## 1. WATCH ATTENDANCE CLOSELY

**THE PROBLEM:** Summer attendance naturally becomes less consistent, making it easy for disengaged students to go unnoticed.

**THE SOLUTION:** Track attendance weekly and identify students who haven't attended recently, have suddenly reduced attendance or were previously regular but have gone quiet. The earlier you spot this, the easier it is to re-engage them.

**SIMPLE ACTIONS:** Why not try some of these:

- Send friendly *"haven't seen you"* messages
- Check in personally
- Encourage them back into routine
- Offer support if schedules have changed

**THE BENEFIT:** Students feel noticed, valued, and connected to the club, reducing the likelihood of cancellation.





## 2. INCREASE COMMUNICATION (WITHOUT OVERWHELMING PEOPLE)

**THE PROBLEM:** Many clubs unintentionally become quieter over summer. When communication slows down, students mentally disconnect from the club.

**THE SOLUTION:** Stay visible and consistent. Communication doesn't always need to be promotional.

In fact, the best-performing clubs often focus on:

- Encouragement
- Community
- Recognition
- Motivation
- Club culture

**SIMPLE ACTIONS:** Why not try some of these:

- Weekly motivation posts
- Student shoutouts
- Summer challenge updates
- Upcoming events reminders
- *"We missed you this week"* messages

**THE BENEFIT:** Even when attendance dips slightly, students still feel connected and engaged.





### 3. CREATE SHORT-TERM GOALS

**THE PROBLEM:** Without structure, students lose focus over summer.

**THE SOLUTION:** Give members something to work towards.

This could include:

- Gradings
- Summer attendance challenges
- Skill targets
- Team competitions
- Reward systems

**WHY IT WORKS:** Progress creates motivation. Students who feel they are moving forward are far more likely to stay committed.

**THE BENEFIT:** Higher engagement, better attendance, and improved retention heading into September.

### 4. REINFORCE ROUTINE

**THE PROBLEM:** Summer holidays disrupt habits. Once training becomes optional, students can quickly fall out of routine altogether.

**THE SOLUTION:** Position training as part of their normal week - even during summer. Encourage consistency over perfection.

Messaging Ideas:

- *"Even one session keeps momentum going"*
- *"Stay sharp over summer"*
- *"Keep your progress moving forward"*

**THE BENEFIT:** Students maintain connection and routine, making them far more likely to continue long-term.



## THE GOLDEN RETENTION STRATEGY MOST CLUBS OVERLOOK

Small moments create long-term members. One of the biggest mistakes Martial Arts clubs make over summer is assuming retention is only about attendance. It's not. Retention is emotional before it's practical.

Students rarely stay purely because of:

- The timetable
- The syllabus
- The facilities
- Or even the price

They stay because they feel:

- Connected
- Recognised
- Part of something
- Motivated to continue

And summer is usually the first time that connection weakens. This is where what we call “**micro connection moments**” become incredibly important.

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### WHAT ARE MICRO CONNECTION MOMENTS?

They're small interactions that remind a student:

*“I matter here.”*

These moments often seem insignificant on their own, but consistently they create stronger loyalty, better attendance, and improved retention.

## Examples include:

- A quick *"haven't seen you this week"* message
- An instructor remembering a student's grading goal
- A shoutout on social media
- A simple *"great effort tonight"*
- A personalised check-in
- A birthday message
- Celebrating consistency or progress

**Most students don't expect perfection. But they do want to feel seen.**

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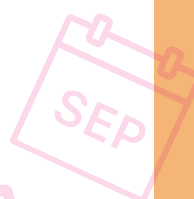
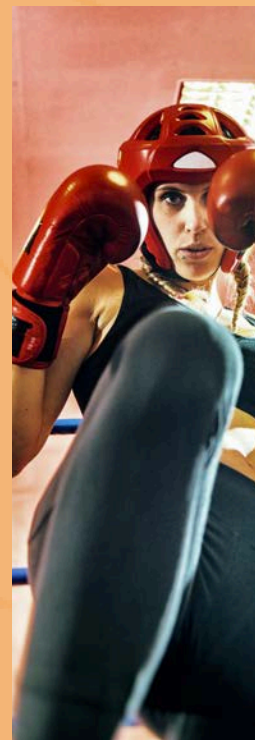
## WHY THIS MATTERS MORE IN SUMMER

During term time, routine does a lot of the heavy lifting. People attend because school schedules are structured, parents are in routine and work patterns are predictable.

Summer removes that structure. Which means emotional connection becomes even more important. If students feel disconnected from the club, attendance becomes optional very quickly.

**But when students still feel included, encouraged, valued and part of the community. They are far more likely to continue attending - even inconsistently.**

**And crucially... they are far more likely to return fully in September.**



## SIMPLE RETENTION ACTIONS THAT WORK

The good news is this doesn't require huge amounts of time. In fact, some of the highest-impact retention actions are incredibly simple.

### 1. THE 7-DAY RULE

If a student hasn't attended for 7 days longer than their normal pattern, contact them. Not with pressure. Just with connection.

**Example:** *"Hey! We haven't seen you for a little while - hope everything's okay. Looking forward to seeing you back soon 🙌"*

This small message alone can prevent silent drop-off.

### 3. CELEBRATE CONSISTENCY, NOT JUST ACHIEVEMENT

Many clubs only celebrate gradings, wins and competitions. But consistency is what actually builds retention.

Celebrate:

- Attendance streaks
- Effort
- Improvement
- Positive attitude

This creates belonging.

### 2. INSTRUCTOR VISIBILITY

Students retain better when instructors remain visible outside of classes.

**Simple ways to do this:**

- Short videos
- Social posts
- Summer tips
- Behind-the-scenes content
- Personal encouragement

This keeps the club feeling active and connected even during quieter periods.

### 4. GIVE STUDENTS MINI GOALS

Long-term goals can feel distant over summer. Mini goals keep momentum moving.

**Examples:**

- Attend 6 sessions over summer
- Improve one technique
- Bring a friend
- Complete a challenge sheet

Small wins maintain engagement.

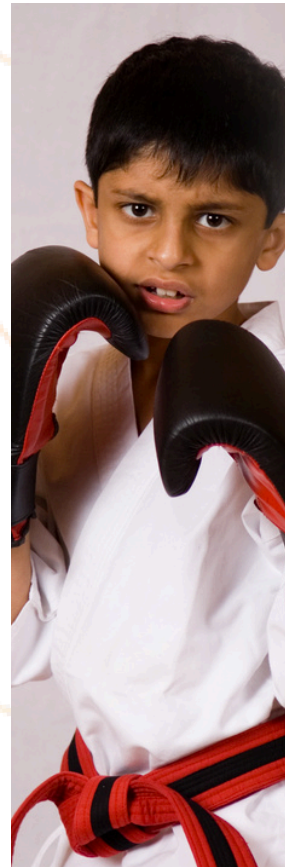
## THE BIGGER PICTURE

Most cancellations don't happen because a student suddenly decides to quit. They happen because the emotional connection slowly weakens over time. The clubs with the strongest retention systems understand this. They don't just teach classes.

They intentionally create:

- Community
- Accountability
- Recognition
- Connection

Especially during summer, these small actions often make the biggest difference. **Because students who feel connected rarely leave quietly.**



## 5. KEEP YOUR CLUB VISIBLE

**THE PROBLEM:** Out of sight often means out of mind.

**THE SOLUTION:** Stay consistently active across social media, email, text communication and member apps/groups. Visibility creates familiarity and reinforces your club culture.

**CONTENT IDEAS:**

- Holiday timetable reminders
- Summer tips
- Member achievements
- Behind-the-scenes content
- Instructor videos

**THE BENEFIT:** Students remain emotionally connected to the club, even during busy periods.



## 6. USE EVENTS TO RE-ENGAGE STUDENTS

**THE PROBLEM:** Summer can feel fragmented without key moments bringing members together.

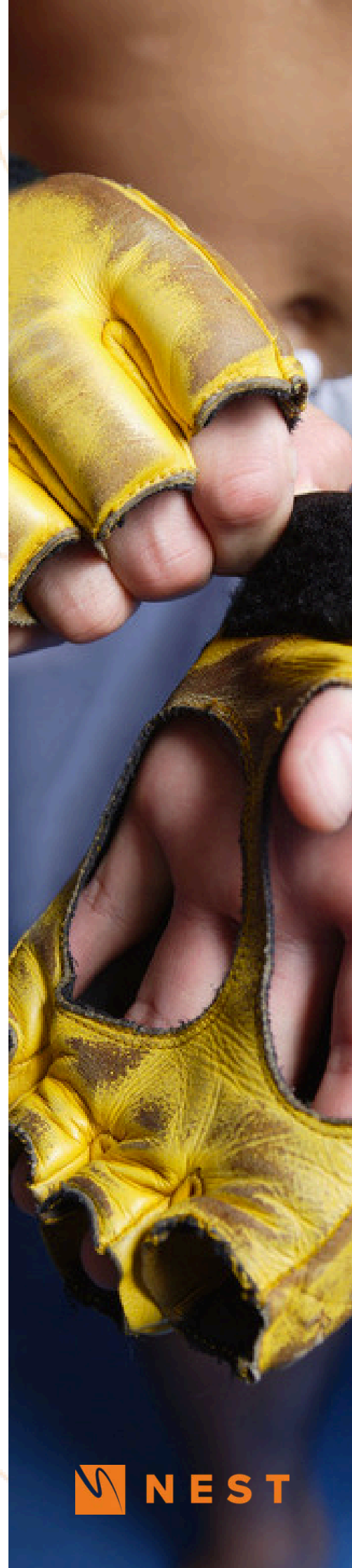
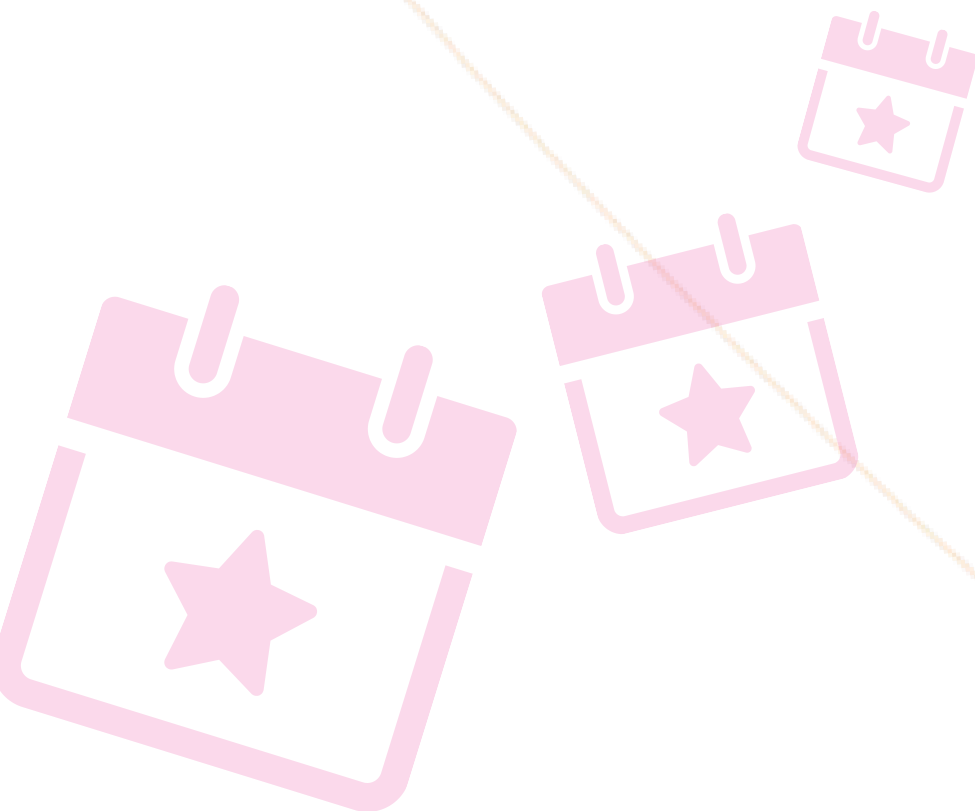
**THE SOLUTION:** Run events that create excitement and community.

Examples:

- Summer camps
- Workshops
- Team challenges
- Family sessions
- Outdoor training
- Social events

**WHY IT MATTERS:** Events strengthen relationships and remind students why they joined in the first place.

**THE BENEFIT:** Stronger community, better engagement, and improved retention.



## 7. DON'T STOP MARKETING

**THE PROBLEM:** Many clubs reduce marketing over summer, assuming demand slows down.

**THE REALITY:** Summer is often one of the **BEST** opportunities to generate leads.

### Why?

- Less competition
- Lower ad costs
- Parents actively searching for activities
- More openness to trying something new

**THE SOLUTION:** Keep your marketing active and focus on:

- Beginner offers
- Family-friendly messaging
- Summer trial campaigns
- Back-to-school preparation

**THE BENEFIT:** You build a stronger pipeline before September arrives.

ADS

## 8. FOCUS ON SYSTEMS, NOT JUST EFFORT

**THE PROBLEM:** Many clubs rely on manual processes and inconsistent follow-up.

This leads to:

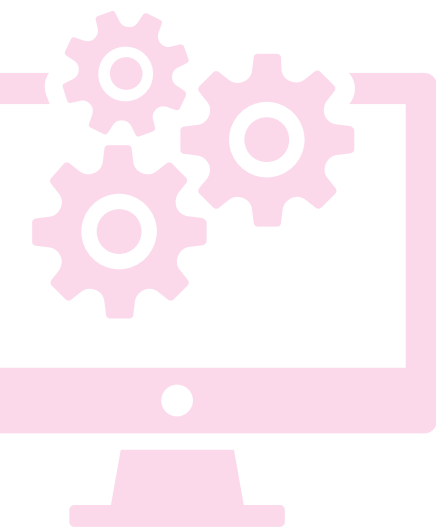
- Missed leads
- Poor communication
- Retention issues
- More stress



**THE SOLUTION:** Use systems that help automate and simplify:

- Attendance tracking
- Follow-ups
- Member communication
- Lead nurturing
- Event reminders

**THE BENEFIT:** Better consistency, improved retention, and more time to focus on your students.





## FINAL THOUGHTS

Summer doesn't have to mean slower growth. The clubs that perform best in September are usually the ones who:

- Protected retention early
- Stayed visible
- Kept communication strong
- Continued generating leads
- Focused on consistency

**Small actions over summer often create the biggest long-term results. The key is staying proactive instead of reactive. Because by the time cancellations start increasing... the real issue has often already happened weeks earlier.**



## WANT HELP PUTTING THIS INTO PRACTICE?

At NEST, we work with Martial Arts clubs across the UK to help improve:

- Retention
- Lead generation
- Communication
- Systems
- Overall club growth



If you'd like help reviewing your current setup and identifying opportunities before September, get in touch with the team for a Summer Growth Review.

Call us on: **0115 945 5030** or email [enquiries@nestmanagement.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@nestmanagement.co.uk)



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