



# A step by step guide to building a healthy and happy volunteer community

For event teams and  
ambassadors  
Version 1.0

# Welcome

This guide is designed to help parkrun event teams and ambassadors create a healthy and happy volunteer community.

Volunteering, like walking, jogging, running and spectating, is a terrific way for parkrun communities to enhance their health and happiness.

This guide aims to empower event teams and ambassadors to encourage as many people as possible to discover the joys of lending a hand, and therefore build sustainable volunteering communities at parkrun events.

Incorporating global insight from parkrun surveys and feedback from event teams and ambassadors, this guide covers the foundations to create a positive culture of volunteering alongside advice and tips to help build a team of volunteers.



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# Quick links and key takeaways

To review the key points from this guide, please click the links on the right to access the checklist for the main sections.

For quick hints and tips on volunteering please refer to the [Volunteer Top Tips](#)

## Culture



[Volunteering culture summary](#)

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# Volunteering Culture





**Why have  
volunteering at  
parkrun?**



**How does  
volunteering  
happen?**



**Key volunteering  
culture points**

## Volunteering culture

Volunteering significantly improves people's health and happiness, contributing to the [parkrun vision](#) of a healthier and happier planet. That's why the whole parkrun community, including event teams and ambassadors, want as many people as possible to have the opportunity to participate as volunteers.

We, as event teams, ambassadors and the parkrun Head Office, promote volunteering as a way to make a significant contribution to the local community, deliver events, to learn and develop new skills, or to add to an existing skill set. It's also a great opportunity to meet a new and diverse range of people.



**Why have  
volunteering at  
parkrun?**



**How does  
volunteering  
happen?**



**Key volunteering  
culture points**

## **Volunteering culture**

At parkrun, it is important people volunteer for the love of it.

We invite anyone in our communities to get involved and gift their time, not to 'give up' their time. We always aim for volunteering at parkrun to be fun, not a chore.

Volunteering is voluntary - we don't expect anyone to volunteer unless they want to.

As with anything in life, people are much more likely to do something again if they enjoy it and are much more likely to make a habit of doing something they really enjoy.



**Why have  
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**Key volunteering  
culture points**

# Volunteering culture

## **Volunteering is participation**

All volunteers at parkrun are participating in parkrun, just like walkers and runners. When we say “participants” this encompasses all the ways people can take part in parkrun.

## **Volunteering is easy and enjoyable**

In a recent parkrun survey in July 2023, 91% of volunteers who responded said volunteering at parkrun is easy and 92% said it was enjoyable. When recruiting and referring to volunteers, encourage people with positive language and photos. Who wouldn't want 'in' when it looks so much fun?!





**Why have  
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parkrun?**



**How does  
volunteering  
happen?**



**Key volunteering  
culture points**

## **Volunteering culture**

### **Volunteers are always welcome**

It's absolutely fine to add extra roles at any time including on parkrunday. If you turn people away, they may never offer again. [See FAQ for some suggestions to help here.](#)

We can always benefit from a few extra volunteers standing, smiling and clapping on the course. Doubling up on Marshals, Course Set Up, Tail Walker or any volunteer role can make it twice as much fun.



**Why have  
volunteering at  
parkrun?**



**How does  
volunteering  
happen?**



**Key volunteering  
culture points**

## **Volunteering culture**

### **Make the volunteers feel special**

Invite the walkers, runners and spectators to show their appreciation for the volunteers at the pre-event welcome.

Thank the volunteers personally before and after the event.

Take a volunteer group photo and acknowledge their participation on social media and in the event report.

Remember their names and say hello the next time you see them.



**Why have  
volunteering at  
parkrun?**



**How does  
volunteering  
happen?**



**Key volunteering  
culture points**

## **Volunteering culture**

**Celebrate anyone who lends a hand with a volunteer credit**

Some of our volunteer roles are excellent gateway tasks to help people gain confidence and become a stepping stone to other roles.

For example:

Event Day Course Check, Pre-Event Set Up, First Timers Welcome, Marshal, Photographer, Token Sorting, Equipment Storage, Volunteer Coordinator, Report Writer and Communications Person.



**Why have  
volunteering at  
parkrun?**



**How does  
volunteering  
happen?**



**Key volunteering  
culture points**

## **Volunteering culture**

### **Create a safe and inclusive environment for volunteers**

Try to have a designated volunteer who is there to welcome all volunteers, and if it's their first time at the event, take some extra time to connect with them either before, during or after the event. Whilst the Run Director can be the person who welcomes everyone, this can also be delegated to another volunteer such as the Volunteer Coordinator.

Also, don't assume that they know what parkrun is just yet. Create space for them to ask questions and make sure they feel comfortable in their volunteer role.

Finally, always be respectful and embrace the diversity of volunteers, whether that shows in terms of gender, race, sexual orientation, or religion. We are all different but there is space at parkrun for all of us!

# Volunteer culture - key takeaways and printable checklist

**Volunteering significantly improves peoples health and happiness.**

**Volunteers are always welcome.**

**Promote volunteering as a way to make a significant contribution to the local community, deliver events, to learn and develop new skills.**

**Anyone who lends a hand at parkrun is offered a volunteer credit.**

**It is important that people volunteer for the love of it.**

**If someone is a first time volunteer, take some extra time to connect with them either before, during or after the event.**

**Volunteering is participation at parkrun.**

**The parkrun community is always respectful and embrace the diversity of volunteers. We are all different but there is space at parkrun for all of us.**



# Step by step guide

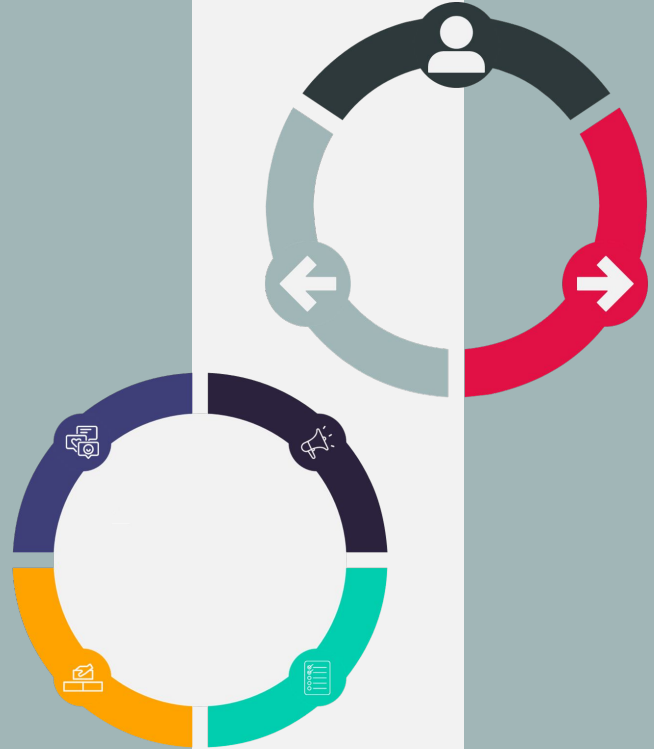


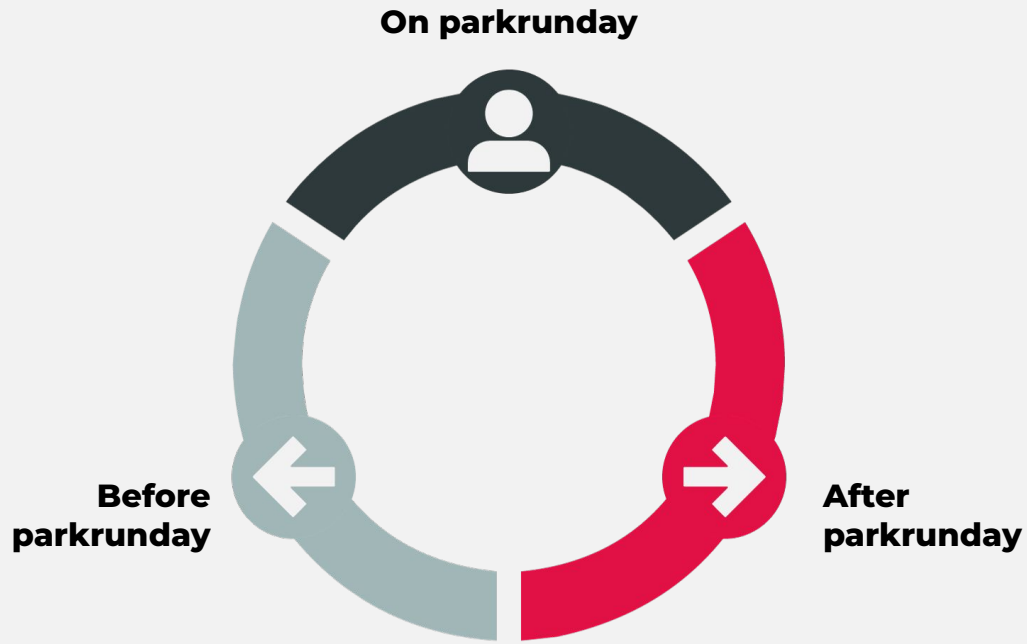
# Every Week & Ongoing

Promoting the volunteer culture, building the volunteer community and encouraging people to benefit from this form of participation requires continuous activity every week!

The following two sections provide practical examples of actions to support your efforts as event teams and ambassadors to promote volunteering at your event.

We do encourage you to use all or some of the listed actions which can positively impact volunteering at the event you support.





**Every Week**





Before  
parkrunday



On  
parkrunday



After  
parkrunday

### Create opportunities on the roster for more people to get involved

- Run Directors and Event Directors do an amazing job each week helping to facilitate their local parkrun event but they don't need to do everything! Share knowledge, delegate tasks and encourage people to try new roles. Event Day Course Check, Pre-Event Set Up, First Timers Welcome, Token Sorting, Equipment Storage and Report Writer are all excellent gateway roles to volunteering. These can be combined with a walk/run too if they wish but most importantly it enables someone who may not have otherwise considered helping out to get involved. Fingers crossed they love it and come back again.
- You can add more roles to the roster in [WebFMS \(EMS coming soon\)](#)

### Add a Volunteer Coordinator role on the roster

- Having a [Volunteer Coordinator](#) is a great way to have someone focused on promoting volunteering and encouraging more people to get involved either during the week, on parkrun event day or both. It's a really rewarding role and can be great stepping stone for anyone interested in becoming a Run Director and/or Event Director or simply someone who loves engaging with the community.

### Keep the event roster updated and add names to the volunteer roster in advance

- It helps your community understand how we operate, makes the event look vibrant and enables people to see what opportunities are available in upcoming weeks. Use the publicly visible volunteer roster on EMS/WebFMS (and not separate private lists) and add volunteers in advance.

### Let your community know early in the week about volunteering opportunities

- Share the [volunteer videos](#) and any photos of your volunteer community early in the week with a call out for people to get involved.
- Encourage those who are spectating or unable to walk or run, to volunteer which will help them stay connected to the parkrun community.





Before  
parkrunday



On  
parkrunday



After  
parkrunday

### Send out a regular volunteer appeal email

- Let your community know on social media and at the event, how to **'opt-in'** to the volunteer appeal email - the link in the results email and the volunteer thank you email.
- As an organisation we actively encourage parkrunners to 'opt-in' and hundreds of people do every week, so they are expecting to hear from you.
- Personalise the emails to make them more readable, and consider sharing the content on social media too so that people who don't currently opt-in can get a feel for what they say and start to understand the concept.
- Send the volunteer appeal email early in the week (Monday and Tuesday) to let your community know about the upcoming volunteering opportunities available.

### Send out the volunteer reminder email the day before

- This is a great way to remind the volunteers when and where to come and reassure anyone who may be feeling nervous. Keep the email friendly and positive.



Weekly



Before  
parkrunday



On  
parkrunday



After  
parkrunday

### Be prepared to populate any remaining volunteer spots on the morning of the event

- It can feel disheartening when there are roles that have not been populated on the roster, especially the night before parkrunday. It's understandable to feel this way and to be worried that the event may not be able to go ahead the next day. Please know your Event Ambassador and all the parkrun Head Office team are here to support. Please reach out as early in the week as possible if you need any help.
- Event teams will always be supported and empowered to make a decision on whether or not to go ahead with a parkrun event, however experience shows that the parkrun community will usually respond on parkrun day to help out. Not everyone is on social media/opted-in to emails so may not see the appeals for roles that have not been filled. Doing a friendly shout out during the event welcome will find people who want to help out. Spectators may come forward or walkers and runners could pivot to volunteer on the day.
- Remember that people 'give' their time, they do not 'give up' their time; volunteering is and should always be a positive experience.



# Before parkrunday - key takeaways and printable checklist

**Create many volunteer opportunities on the roster.**

**Encourage parkrunners who are spectating or taking a break from walking or running, to stay connected to the community by volunteering.**

**Add a Volunteer Coordinator role on the roster.**

**Share volunteer role videos.**

**Add names to the volunteer roster in advance.**

**Send out the reminder email to your rostered volunteers.**

**Send out a regular volunteer appeal email.**

**Be prepared to populate any remaining volunteer spots on the morning of the event.**

**Let the community know early in the week about volunteering opportunities.**





Before  
parkrunday



On  
parkrunday



After  
parkrunday

### Welcome all the volunteers

- Say “hi” and welcome all the volunteers as they arrive. Introduce them to the other volunteers and help them feel part of the team. Consider having a Volunteer Coordinator on the roster who can help welcome the volunteers.
- If your local parkrun has people who speak languages other than English, be mindful and try to find someone to help translate!

### Promote any volunteer spaces on the day at the event welcome

- Let the community know on event day. Anyone having a break from walking and running? Anyone spectating? Positively promote volunteering in the event day welcome and first timers welcome. Make volunteering sound irresistible and invite the community to join in the fun.

### Welcome anyone to volunteer who offers on event day

- If someone asks to volunteer on event day there are lots of ways they can help out. Be generous with your volunteer credits. The more volunteer credits you give out, the more volunteers you will find you have.

### Talk to your community about volunteering on event day

- Surveys undertaken by parkrun show that **more than half of volunteers first heard about volunteering and signed up to volunteer directly at an event.**
- Let the community know in the event welcome and first timers welcome all the benefits about lending a hand. **Vary the wording** each week so the volunteering bit stands out and ask the volunteers to raise their hands so people take notice.
- Bring a whiteboard or a pen and paper and ask someone, perhaps a Volunteer Coordinator, with a positive personality to spread the word about helping out and recruit parkrunners to volunteer. When people are finishing their walk/run and feeling positive about the parkrun experience, is a great opportunity to invite them to join in future weeks as volunteers.
- Chat to first time parkrunners during the event about volunteering and invite them to get involved
- Some people may rather walk or run, but are happy to volunteer if they are aware of the fun and diverse opportunities available.





**Before  
parkrunday**

**Weekly**



**On  
parkrunday**



**After  
parkrunday**

### **Thank the volunteers in the event welcome**

- Invite the community to give a round of applause for all the volunteers. Celebrate any milestone volunteers and any new volunteers. You can use Event Management System (EMS) to identify imminent milestones by clicking on the names listed on the roster to reveal their individual volunteer credit total. Make the volunteers feel special.

### **Invite walkers/runners as they finish to get involved**

- Create opportunities to jump in and scan barcodes (they get automatically added to the roster), help pack away the event kit or sort the finish position tokens.

### **Walk around with the “want to volunteer” board**

- Many in the community are happy to participate as volunteers, however they are not aware that opportunities are available. Consider having a volunteer walk around with the “want to volunteer board” and chat to the community about the roles available and how great it is to participate as a volunteer.

### **Show them the volunteer milestone club merchandise**

- Seeing the volunteer milestone club merchandise such as the t-shirts and pins, might just be the hook to get someone to initially to sign up. They’ll soon realise how absolutely brilliant volunteering really is!

### **Thank all the volunteers before they leave**

- It can be busy at the end however try to acknowledge all the volunteers before they leave and thank them for participating.

### **Take a group photo of the team of volunteers**

- Taking a photo of the volunteer team is a great way to celebrate and thank all the volunteers and also showcase volunteering on the event social media page. Please ensure all volunteers are comfortable to be part of any pictures taken and let them know if you plan to share on social media.



# On parkrunday - key takeaways and printable checklist

**Welcome all the volunteers.**

**Invite walkers/runners as they finish to get involved.**

**Promote any volunteer spaces on the day at the event welcome.**

**Walk around with the “want to volunteer” board.**

**Welcome anyone to volunteer who offers.**

**Show the community the volunteer milestone merchandise.**

**Talk to your community about volunteering.**

**Thank all the volunteers before they leave.**

**Thank the volunteers in the event welcome.**

**Take a group photo of the team of volunteers.**





Before  
parkrunday



On  
parkrunday



After  
parkrunday

### **Thank the volunteers and post a photo to social media of all the volunteers**

- Posting a photo is a great way to say thank you.
- Encourage the community to comment (e.g. show us your hi-fives in the comments below for all today's volunteers).

### **Highlight volunteering in the event report**

- An event report can showcase the event and highlight volunteering. This is an excellent way to share news, help build community engagement, celebrate being active together and set the tone at your event.
- Invite a parkrunner to write an event report and be creative with it (make it their own) and mention them when posting it to social media "...this week's event report is by Jane Smith...!". Credit them for it on the volunteer roster.
- Please consider adding the role of Report Writer to your template roster. It may bring forward new volunteers.

### **Invite the community early to volunteer in future weeks**

- Let the community know there are many ways to participate at parkrun. Volunteering is as great for your health and wellbeing as walking and running. Why not give it a try? Let people know how to volunteer with a post on social media on the Monday or Tuesday after parkrunday.





# After parkrun day - key takeaways and printable checklist



**Thank the volunteers and post a photo to social media of all the volunteers.**

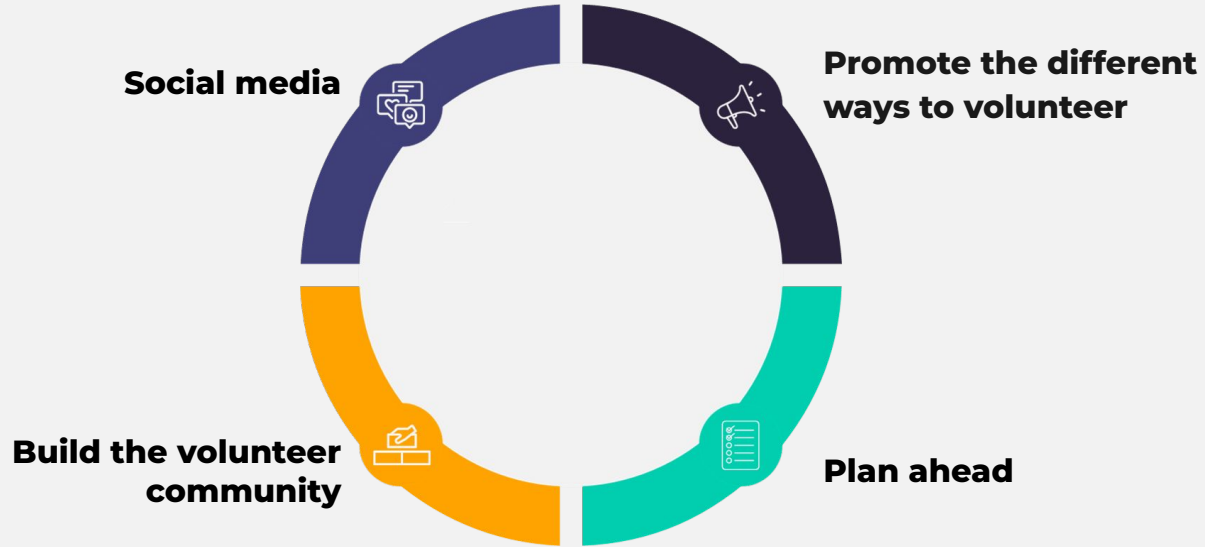


**Invite the community early in the following week to volunteer in future weeks.**



**Highlight volunteering in the Event Report.**





# Ongoing



**Promote  
volunteering on  
social media**



**Promote all the  
different ways  
to volunteer**



**Plan ahead**



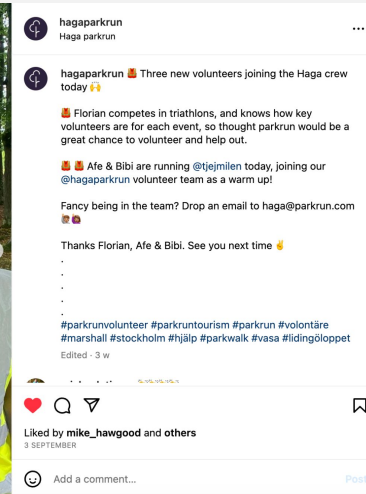
**Build the  
volunteer  
community**

## Promote volunteering on social media

parkrun social media accounts are where a lot of people will hear about the event you support and get a feeling for what parkrun is all about. It's a great way to promote volunteering and how people can contribute and benefit through it.

Posting regularly on Facebook and other social media platforms is a proven way to grow your parkrun community. This includes walk, jog, run and volunteer participants. If you are pressed for time during the week, scheduling posts at the beginning of the week is a quick and easy way to ensure you reach your local community on social media without the need to go in each day to post something.

**[Click here for more examples](#)**





**Promote  
volunteering on  
social media**



**Promote all the  
different ways  
to volunteer**



**Plan ahead**



**Build the  
volunteer  
community**

## Add a communications person volunteer role to help with social media

There are many people who would love to help out away from parkrunday who have the skills and time to help on social media. This can be a great way to help to promote more about volunteering on social media.

## Remind people how easy it is to volunteer

Keep reminding people how easy it is to volunteer! This [How to Volunteer](#) blog piece explains the ways that you can get involved.

## Share some stats

A recent survey showed that people who volunteer at parkrun feel an improved sense of happiness compared to those who just walk or run. [Read more about that here](#). You can find some volunteering stats relating specifically to your event on the wiki. Here's [Shellharbour parkrun](#) in Australia as an example (see the last two rows of the Summary Stats table).

|                            | Ever  | Past Year | Year To Date | Past Month | Month To Date | Past Week |
|----------------------------|-------|-----------|--------------|------------|---------------|-----------|
| <b>Registrations</b>       | 5965  | 186       | 78           | 44         | 22            | 7         |
| <b>Runs</b>                | 64321 | 3070      | 1577         | 890        | 444           | 196       |
| <b>Participants</b>        | 7194  | 1092      | 649          | 464        | 308           | 178       |
| <b>Volunteer Occasions</b> | 6288  | 300       | 149          | 89         | 42            | 21        |
| <b>Volunteers</b>          | 669   | 111       | 68           | 54         | 34            | 21        |





**Promote volunteering on social media**



**Promote all the different ways to volunteer**



**Plan ahead**



**Build the volunteer community**

**Ongoing**

## Share the volunteer page of your website

Refer people to the [Getting Involved](#) tab and the future roster page. [Contact](#) the parkrun Head Office to upload a photo of your event volunteers on to the Volunteer page of your event website.

## Share the [Volunteer Hub](#)

Share what each volunteer role involves.

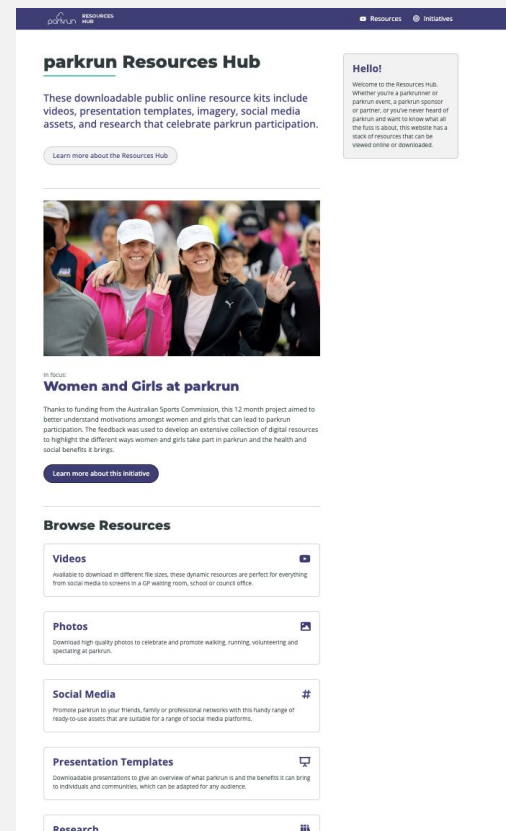
## Share the [Volunteer Videos](#)

## Share parkrun blog volunteer content

Search parkrun blog articles on your parkrun country webpage for volunteer stories to share.

## Check out the [parkrun Resources Hub](#)

The [parkrun Resources Hub](#) (in English only for now) contains downloadable public online resource kits, which include videos, presentation templates, imagery, social media assets, and research that celebrates parkrun participation.





**Promote  
volunteering on  
social media**

### **Feature local parkrunners on social media**

Encourage volunteers to say a few words about why they love volunteering (see the post on the right from Lochiel parkrun) and post this along with a happy smiling photo on the event social media channels.



**Promote all the  
different ways  
to volunteer**

### **Invite people to carry out the valuable role of Tail Walker and parkwalker**

These roles can be a great entry role to volunteering plus it earns a volunteer credit and a walk credit too (if they bring their barcode). Have more than one and they can make new parkrun friends!



**Plan ahead**

### **Ask your community to invite a family member or friend along to help out**

Why not bring along a friend or a group of friends and volunteer together? Families can also volunteer together.



**Build the  
volunteer  
community**

### **Encourage juniors to volunteer**

They are learning essential life skills. Please ensure you are aware of the requirements for anyone under 18 volunteering at parkrun.  
[Click here](#) to read more about children at parkrun.



**Lochiel parkrun**

14 h · 🌐



We appreciate our Volunteers so much. Here's a few words from best friends and happy vollies, Suzanne and Louise:

"We both feel that volunteering at parkrun is as enjoyable as walking or running the 5km! Barcode scanning is one of our favourite vollie roles because we are part of a team with heaps of support and we get to interact with everyone - from the speedy people who make it look easy, to the Tail Walkers and everyone in between! It's the perfect vantage point for.....finish line cheering....witnessing PB celebrations.....seeing the delighted faces of the littlest parkrunners proudly holding out their tokens for scanning...and watching the excitement (and sometimes relief!) of first-timers completing their first walk or run!

The Virtual Volunteer App makes the role so very easy - and foolproof too!"

What do you like about barcode scanning at parkrun?

Please share with us in the comments 😊





**Promote volunteering on social media**



**Promote all the different ways to volunteer**



**Plan ahead**



**Build the volunteer community**

## **Network with other local parkrun events**

parkrun is all about community. Reach out to other local parkrun events via email and/or Slack (if an Event Director). Share ideas about participating as a volunteer. What's working for you? What are the challenges? Coordinate reaching out to local community groups.

## **Holidays**

Plan the volunteer roster ahead for upcoming holidays and special event days when some of the community may be away. For example summer school holidays, public holidays and large public events e.g local marathon. Keep an eye out on the parkrun compendium which shows all events being held on special days.

## **Local walking and running events**

Check the calendar for upcoming walking and running events elsewhere in your community. Often walkers and runners want to rest the day before an event. A few weeks ahead of the event, remind your community that walkers and runners can still be involved in parkrun as volunteers and invite them to consider lending a hand.





**Promote  
volunteering on  
social media**



**Promote all the  
different ways  
to volunteer**



**Plan ahead**



**Build the  
volunteer  
community**

### **Involve other local community groups**

Invite community groups, or perhaps some pensioners living locally to be involved with volunteering at your event. Often people just like being involved in a community event supporting physical activity like parkrun.

### **Involve walking/running clubs**

Walking/running clubs can support all volunteer roles and are also great at providing pacers. It's almost guaranteed to bring a few extra personal bests and it helps to break down the perception that running clubs are just for fast people. Please offer a broad range of target times. parkrunners come in all shapes, sizes and speeds!

### **Physical activity organisations**

Consider other physical activity organisations other than walking/running groups that may want to connect wider in the community. Volunteering at parkrun provides a great opportunity for local physical activity groups to get involved in their local community.







**Promote volunteering on social media**



**Promote all the different ways to volunteer**



**Plan ahead**



**Build the volunteer community**

## Local faith organisations

Local faith organisations may be keen to come down and help out. It's a great way to promote diversity and inclusion at the local event you support. parkrun is a great place for everyone to build community!

## Friends of the park

Contact the 'Friends of the park' group if there is one. They might be keen to help out.

## Landowners and councils

Chat to your landowner and/or local council (Health Promotion/Social Welfare section) who may be able to connect you to community organisations that are keen to lend a hand.

## Local volunteer association

There may be a local volunteer association that can signpost people keen to volunteer in the community to parkrun

## Invite to headline

Invite local groups to **headline**. For example, corporates, schools, community groups and physical activity groups.





**Promote volunteering on social media**



**Promote all the different ways to volunteer**



**Plan ahead**



**Build the volunteer community**

## **Put posters up in the local community**

Consider posters in the local library, doctor surgeries, retirement village, supermarket community board, online facebook groups.

## **Local youth groups/education establishments**

Try contacting the local school, college or university. They often have volunteering organisations with students keen to get involved in community events and it adds a line to their resume. Examples of some organisations include, Duke of Edinburgh award, Guides, Scouts. These and other similar organisations, all have volunteering as part of their training and are great ways to help young people gain skills. Please ensure you are aware of the requirements for anyone under 18 volunteering at parkrun. [Click here](#) to read more about children at parkrun.

## **Other local physical activity events**

Look out for opportunities to promote volunteering at local walking, running etc events.

## **Advertise on local volunteering internet sites**

Let your community know through online volunteer sites (e.g The Big Help Out (UK), council volunteer websites). Connect with other local volunteer organisations.





Promote volunteering on social media



Promote all the different ways to volunteer



Plan ahead



Build the volunteer community

## Use local channels to communicate with everyone involved the parkrun volunteer community

Social media groups are all great ways to keep in regular contact with anyone interested in volunteering.

## Hold regular parkrun volunteer meetings

Hold regular meetings with your volunteer team to share best practice, consider any recent parkrunner feedback and discuss recent issues / incidents.

## Encourage parkrunners to join you for refreshments after parkrun

It's a great way to build community, and another opportunity to invite and encourage people to get more involved as volunteers.

## Succession planning

- Do you have a Co-Event Director?
- Do you have enough Run Directors on your volunteer team? Keep considering whether you want to recruit new Run Directors to your team, and think who might be suitable. Remember that some people might not offer themselves, but would be happy to join the team if asked.
- Do you have a plan in place in case anyone steps down?
- Do you liaise with your landowner regularly to maintain a good relationship?



# Ongoing - key takeaways and printable checklist

## Promote volunteering on social media

- Add a communications person volunteer role to help with social media.
- Remind people how easy it is to volunteer.
- Share some volunteering parkrun statistics.
- Share the volunteer page of your website.
- Share the Volunteer Hub.
- Share parkrun blog volunteer content.
- Check out the parkrun Resource Hub.

## Promote all the different ways to volunteer

- Feature local parkrunners on social media.
- Invite people to carry out the valuable role of Tail Walker and parkwalker.
- Ask your community to invite a family member or friend along to help out.
- Encourage juniors to volunteer. Read more about children at parkrun at <https://volunteer.parkrun.com/principles/children-at-parkrun>.



# Ongoing - key takeaways and printable checklist

## Planning ahead

- Create local channels to communicate with your volunteer community.
- Hold regular parkrun volunteer meetings.
- Encourage parkrunners to join you for refreshments after parkrun.
- Ensure there is succession planning in place for key roles.
- Network with other local parkrun events.
- Consider upcoming holidays and promoting volunteering opportunities early.
- Check the calendar for local walking and running events.

## Build the volunteer community

- Involve other community and physical activity groups (e.g. running/walking clubs, physical activity organisations, local faith organisations, friends of the park) and invite to headline.
- Reach out to landowners and/or local councils (Health Promotion/Social Welfare section).
- Display parkrun posters in the local community.
- Contact local youth groups/education establishments.
- Advertise on local volunteering websites.



# Help and Support



# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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**It's not fair that some people walk and run only every week and don't volunteer**



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**The roster still has spaces on Friday night. Can the event be cancelled?**



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**We've got enough volunteers, can I ask someone to volunteer next week instead?**



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**It's really hard to fill the roles on the rosters right now. What can we do?**



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**What do we do if someone comes along and all our core roles are filled? What can they do?**



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**What if I don't think someone is particularly suited for a role, for example to be a Timekeeper or Finish Tokens? How do I manage this?**



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**Filling 'extra' roles isn't meaningful for volunteers and may annoy those already volunteering leaving them with little to do.**



# FAQs



## **It's not fair that some people walk and run only every week and don't volunteer**

Always remember our parkrun vision of a healthier and happier planet. On any given Saturday or Sunday morning, how someone participates in parkrun should be in a way that they choose and in a way that is making them healthier and happier. If that is walking, running or spectating, and they do that every week, that is absolutely fine.

We know sometimes it can be hard to rouse the community to get involved as volunteers. However, don't waste your energy being cross about people who don't volunteer. People are welcome to participate in parkrun however they choose.

Remember support is always there for you, whether that is your fellow volunteers in your community, your Ambassador or the team in the parkrun Head Office. We are all here to help.



## **The roster still has spaces on Friday night. Can the event be cancelled?**

It can feel disheartening when there are roles that have not been filled on the roster, especially the night before. It's understandable to feel this way and to be worried that the event may not be able to go ahead the next day.

Event teams will always be supported and empowered to make a decision on whether or not to go ahead with a parkrun event, however experience shows that the parkrun community will usually respond on parkrun day to help out. Not everyone is on social media/opted in to emails so they may not see the appeals for roles that have not been filled. Doing a friendly shout out during the event welcome will find people who want to help out. Spectators may come forward or walkers and runners could pivot to volunteer on the day.

Remember that people 'give' their time, they do not 'give up' their time; volunteering is and should always be a positive experience.



# FAQs



## **We've got enough volunteers, can I ask someone to volunteer next week instead?**

There will absolutely be parkrunners who pop their hand up to help out one week who may be happy to volunteer in a future week and walk/run this week, however, this won't be the case for everyone so please take a moment to consider:

- There will be parkrunners who ask to volunteer because they “need” to volunteer. It's what brings them healthiness and happiness on a Saturday morning. If someone is asking when the roster has all the roles filled or asks on the event day, this is more than likely because they really want to volunteer. The alternative might be staying in bed and not returning to parkrun again. We need to be aware of this and try not to assume they want to walk, jog or run as an alternative.
- Saying “yes” and enabling anyone to volunteer when they want to, builds a longer term culture around volunteering at parkrun. That person who offers to volunteer and gets an immediate “yes”, straight away feels welcomed, valued and part of the community. There is a much better chance that we will have someone who goes away that week, advocates and raves about lending a hand at their local parkrun, and is much more likely to return again and pop their hand up to help out in future weeks.
- Asking someone to “volunteer next week” may actually mean they don't volunteer at all and may not return to parkrun again. Despite the restrictions of the last few years lifting, some people are hesitant about committing in advance and we can't assume people can volunteer in future weeks.

# FAQs



## **It's really hard to fill the roles on the rosters right now. What can we do?**

We know not every roster is overflowing and that event teams can feel pressure and stress on the days leading up to parkrun day when there are still volunteer spaces to be filled. Ambassadors and everyone in the parkrun Head Office genuinely want to help as much as we can. We are always here to support you on [email](#), on Slack (for event directors and ambassadors), on the phone and through our global information [resources](#) and the [tips](#) we share.

By always saying “yes” to anyone who wants to volunteer, the event you support builds a long term, sustainable culture with their community and volunteering.

It's okay to encourage parkrunners to let the event team know as early as possible when they would like to help out; however, always emphasise that anyone is welcome anytime.

# FAQs



## **What do we do if someone comes along and all our core roles are filled? What can they do?**

Firstly, ask them if there is anything they would like to do or not do?

- Are they an experienced volunteer and can mentor a new recruit?
- Are they inexperienced and can be mentored by an experienced volunteer?
- Are they inexperienced and could join in with another inexperienced person for moral support?

Then consider:

- There is a lot to be gained by an experienced volunteer having some training responsibility, as it gives them a boost.
- Tail Walking is always great for a chat/community building and if there is any kind of trouble or emergency, it's great to have a few volunteers out on the course.
- There can never be too many volunteers or volunteer roles. For example, marshals on the course cheering and being the eyes and ears and barcode scanners as parkrunners finish.
- Meeters and greeters who welcome everyone and funnel managers are all wonderful for putting new parkrunners at ease. Helping out with 'crowd control' at the end, directing people to scanners, congratulating finishers, recommending cafes, etc. This all adds to the warm community feel.
- All volunteer roles at parkrun are easy and no-one ever 'messes up' which as we know is a concern for some people.

# FAQs



## **What if I don't think someone is particularly suited for a role, for example to be a Timekeeper or Finish Tokens? How do I manage this?**

We believe that all the volunteer roles are simple enough for everyone to carry out, as long as adequate training and support is provided.

We know that some of the roles around the finish area are seen as a bit more 'high pressure' and that this sometimes can have the effect of putting people off volunteering in these roles. However, we know that if people are given training in the roles, and are supported during the event, then they can learn about and practice these roles.

This may mean having an experienced Timekeeper to work alongside someone new in the role, or providing 'Finish Tokens Support' to someone new in the 'Finish Tokens' role, to help them through the process.

It will certainly be time well spent, developing the skills of the individuals involved, and reinforcing the community feeling within the event team.

# FAQs



## **Filling 'extra' roles isn't meaningful for volunteers and may annoy those already volunteering leaving them with little to do.**

A lot of this comes down to the culture of volunteering created at the event. If there is a sense that having 'extra' volunteers is a waste of someone's walk or run, then it won't work. It needs to be that whatever the role, if it's bite-sized or more involved, it's valued and appreciated by everyone in the parkrun community.

If someone trains a barcode scanner at the start, or someone lays out the finishing cones before parkrun and then walks parkrun or if someone turns up and asks to volunteer on event day and then pairs up with another marshal on the course — for all of these people the culture at parkrun should be that being involved as a volunteer is always a positive experience. For a lot of parkrunners being included in the event as a volunteer in any role and being genuinely thanked, appreciated and acknowledged by the community will mean they have a healthy, happy and meaningful parkrun experience. “Meaningful” will mean different things to different people.

Thank everyone who takes part as a volunteer, make them feel welcome and valued and you will not only have someone who leaves parkrun that day, raves about their experience and is very likely to come back and help out again, but also have helped create a long term positive culture of lending a hand at parkrun.

# Further help

For further information and help, please have a look at the following resources:

- [Global Volunteer Hub](#)
- [Global parkrun Resources Hub](#)
- [Safeguarding Hub](#)
- [Wiki \(stats\)](#)
- [Volunteer Top Tips](#)
- [Support site](#)

If you need any further help, support or have any questions, please contact your Event Ambassador or parkrun [Head Office support](#).

The screenshot displays the 'parkrun RESOURCES HUB' website. At the top right, there are links for 'Resources' and 'Initiatives'. On the left side, there is a search panel with the following sections:

- Search** (with a magnifying glass icon)
- Resource Type**:
  - Videos
  - Photos
  - Social Media
  - Presentation Templates
  - Research
- Initiatives**:
  - Move It AUS: Women and Girls at parkrun
- Keywords**: A text input field containing 'volunteering' and a 'Submit' button.

The main content area is titled 'Home Resources'. It features three featured resource cards, each with a photo, a name, and a quote:

- Amy**: "I came to parkrun to run but I discovered volunteering. That to me is better than running." - Amy
- Emma**: "I get excited about going to parkrun and volunteering." - Emma
- Janine**: "I'm a shy person. Volunteering at parkrun gives me the chance to develop my personal skills and public speaking." - Janine

# Managing volunteers

## EMS and WebFMS

parkrun has [two applications that help events manage their weekly volunteers.](#)

1. Web Field Management System (WebFMS)
2. Event Management System (EMS).

EMS is currently being released and will replace WebFMS entirely in 2024. EMS has been designed and optimised to work on laptops, tablets and smartphones.

Both systems can be accessed through a parkrunners profile account, but permissions must be given by the event team to use the Volunteer Roster management functions.

Whilst the functionality is available in WebFMS, EMS should be used for sending out Volunteer Appeal and Reminder emails and managing the Volunteer Roster.

WebFMS can only be used, at the moment, for editing of the Volunteer Roster and Email templates.

# Event Welcome example wording

Below are some examples of wording to use during the event welcome to help promote volunteering to your community. You can use the examples below on a rotation basis and also add your own.

Use positive language, give examples of the benefits of volunteering and remember to give all your volunteers a shout out and a round of applause.

## Example 1

- We invite you to give volunteering a try to help improve your health and happiness, and add huge value to:
  - Personal development
  - Social interaction
  - Exposure to a natural environment away from the computer screens
- This is what can be gained from volunteering, we'd love for you to join us

## Example 2

- Are you looking to improve confidence and learn new skills? Want to improve your interaction and communication with different people?
- Improve your public speaking/confidence
- Lots of great opportunities
- Volunteering looks terrific on your CV



# Event Welcome example wording

## Example 3

- Kids, partners, family and friends who would like to get involved in a community event
- An alternative way to improve their health and fitness
- Improve confidence and skills then we encourage you to bring them down with you

## Example 4

- Shout out for anyone who would like to either use or practise their social media skills
- We would love some help on our social media page. Come have a chat with me after if you are keen.

## Example 5

- Hands up if you have terrific organisational skills
- And love a chat??
- We think you'd make a great volunteer coordinator who helps out on event day and via social media to get more people involved.
- Come have a chat with me after if you are keen.

# Volunteer language guide

| Move from   | Move to  |
|---|--|
| The roster is full<br>Fill the roster                                       | There are always opportunities to lend a hand - more marshals cheering, more scanners etc. The core roles may be covered however it's important to communicate that anyone is still welcome to help out. Rather than "fill the roster", use language such as " <b>populate the positions</b> ".  |
| Volunteers give up, give back, doing their bit, making a sacrifice          | Volunteering is a hugely positive experience. The reward is what one gains from volunteering.  |
| parkrun only happens due to volunteers                                      | parkrun is a true team effort and requires the involvement and support of walkers, runners, volunteers, spectators, councils, land managers, sponsors, parkrun staff and supporters. We are all a team.  |
| You need to volunteer a number of times per year                            | The way that a person chooses to participate at parkrun is completely personal to them, and we celebrate and recognise participation in all its forms. Our aim is to empower and provide opportunities for everyone to get involved in a way they feel comfortable because this is the key to regular and enjoyable participation. With volunteering, this means creating and promoting as many volunteering opportunities. The roster is never full. There are always opportunities to lend a hand - more marshals cheering, more scanners etc. Volunteering comes in many forms - some volunteer the whole event, some volunteer at the start and/or finish and walk, jog, run in between. Some never volunteer. We should never guilt anyone to volunteer - all of these combinations are perfectly okay. |
| Those who complete 5k are the only people benefiting from physical activity | Volunteering has many physical and mental benefits. For many people it can be a big step forward and a stepping stone to building the confidence to participate through walking or running.  |
| Exercise  | We know from our insight that the word 'exercise' can have negative connotations for people and is a barrier to participation. 'Physical activity' and 'movement' are our preferred phrases.   |
| Volunteer takeover  | It's great when a group offers to volunteer at parkrun. It's important however that it doesn't seem like there are no opportunities to volunteer for others on the same day. Rephrasing to "X group is <b>headlining</b> " is a more inclusive word to use.  |

# Printable resources

Click the links on the right to  
access

## Weekly



[Before parkrunday - printable checklist](#)



[On parkrunday - printable checklist](#)



[After parkrunday - printable checklist](#)

## Ongoing



[Ongoing - printable checklist](#)

Promote volunteering on social media  
Promote all the different ways to volunteer



[Ongoing - printable checklist](#)

Planning ahead  
Build the volunteer community





Remember, when people **volunteer at parkrun**, they form part of an **awesome team** that is making a **significant contribution** to the **local community**.



**#loveparkrun**  
**#lovevolunteering**