

Ready to start planning your next tryout? Before you dive in, make sure you're covering all your bases. Here's a checklist to get you started.



1-3 months in advance (depending on organization's schedule and field/court/rink availability)

- Establish tryouts format:** Determine how and when tryouts will be conducted, establishing how many days tryouts will last and in what format they will take place (drills, scrimmages, etc.)
- Identify evaluation criteria:** Determine how each skill and criteria will be evaluated. Establish a ranking system and how those rankings will determine a player's overall score.
- Reserve fields/courts/facilities:** Depending on your organization's process, ensure facilities are reserved for the correct dates and times.
- Prepare and send communications to parents:** It's important to alert parents of the tryouts schedule, criteria and expectations. Clear communication upfront about pending cuts or fees can prevent post-tryouts confusion.
- Open player registration:** Give players several weeks to register for tryouts, and to select a time and/or date if more than one tryout session is being held.



3-6 weeks in advance

- Obtain equipment:** Ensure you have cones, whistles, bibs, numbers, and all sports-specific equipment needed for tryouts. Clipboards, pens, pencils, and iPads and phones (if doing electronic scoring) are also needed for evaluators.
- Recruit evaluators:** Reach out to potential candidates who are qualified to evaluate players on specific skills and criteria.
- Recruit volunteers:** Contact parents and members of the organization who are available to help register athletes, hand out numbers, and help with the overall execution of the tryout sessions.



Week of tryouts

- Train evaluators:** Ensure all evaluators know how players are being evaluated and what scoring method is being used. If they are using evaluation software, all evaluators will need to ensure they have basic training on the app and ideally, have a chance to practice.
- Assign volunteers to specific tasks:** Make sure you have enough volunteers assigned to each area or task.
- Train volunteers:** Volunteers will need to know what the expectations are for them and all participants during tryouts. They might also need to be trained in specific tasks.
- Set up evaluation software or scoring sheets:** Customize evaluation forms and/or software to include specific skills players will be evaluated on, and what scoring scales and ranking system evaluators will be using.
- Finalize player registration:** Prepare a final list of players, per tryout session, after the registration deadline passes. Ensure all necessary information is provided prior to tryouts.



Day of tryouts

- Set up athlete registration and check-in areas:** Set up tables, chairs, bibs, athlete numbers and check-in lists. To make the process go faster, assign several volunteers to work at the check-in table, and divide athletes by their last name to allow for more lines and less wait time. A separate line for walk-ups (those who didn't pre-register) can also speed up the process.
- Set up volunteer and evaluator area:** Set aside a spot for evaluators and volunteers to place their personal items during the evaluation, and provide snacks and beverages to keep them happy and engaged throughout the event.
- Finalize and handout athlete list:** Ensure evaluators are in their correct spots to evaluate specific skills and drills.
- Address volunteers with final instructions:** Make sure each volunteer is confident in what they need to do and that they are in place before tryouts begin.
- Address parents and athletes:** Before tryouts commence, talk to the players and parents to ensure everyone knows the format and expectations for the day. Information as to how many players will make the team can be shared at this time. This is also the opportunity for directors to tell parents and players if they are using evaluation software instead of paper forms. The advantages of electronic scoring can be shared, including the quickness and accuracy of results. Directors can explain to parents that because of this software, evaluators will be seen looking at their phones or iPads. This doesn't mean they aren't paying attention to tryouts, they are just entering scores



Post-tryouts

- Compile scores and rank players:** If using evaluation software, this will be done automatically and immediately. If using paper, collect score forms from evaluators and enter data into a spreadsheet to aggregate scores and determine player rankings.
- Assign players to teams:** Whether drafting players or forming competitive teams, it's important to assign players to appropriate teams quickly. Share scoring data with coaches and board members to ensure proper team placement decisions are reached.
- Communicate results to athletes and parents:** Determine how players who were cut (if any) will be informed and what information from evaluations will be shared. For those who made a team, share key information, like schedules and uniform requirements, and determine next steps to begin the season.
- Respond to parent questions related to team assignments and player performance:** Inevitably some parents will want to discuss their child's performance and team placement. By being prepared for this with easily accessible scoring data, player rankings on specific skills, and a summary of comments from evaluators, these conversations can be positive and beneficial.
- Ask for feedback from evaluators, volunteers, athletes and parents:** After tryouts have ended, send out a survey or determine a format for receiving feedback to get tips on what worked and what didn't during this year's tryouts so those areas can be improved for the following season.



Football Tryout Prep Checklist

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