

Minnesota High School Bowling's Coach & Team Manager Handbook Plus “Best Practices”

-- A document inspired by MHSB commissioner Scott Koecheler --

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**If you have any recommendations for
additions or changes to this document,
please send an email to josh@mhsb.org**

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Things that all Minnesota high school bowling coaches or team managers must do

- 1) All coaches and managers should be involved with High School Bowling for the right reasons. Everyone likes to win, but the desire to win should and cannot be greater than offering a great and memorable experience to all bowlers and their families. Coaches should be careful not to display favoritism/bias toward any bowlers.
- 2) Be sure that the league's executive director has your name and contact information
- 3) Be sure that your conference coordinator has your name and contact information
- 4) Find out who your contact(s) are at your sponsoring bowling center and do a good job of communicating with them. Find out what your contact's preferences are for communication (e.g. in person meeting; texting; email; phone calls).
- 5) All high school coaches that work with bowlers need to complete SafeSport training and take refresher training (as indicated via email by SafeSport) as long as they are involved with high school bowling. SafeSport training is free for members of the United States Bowling Congress (USBC). For any questions on SafeSport training, you can send an email to josh@mhsb.org.
- 6) Read and understand the league's rules which are available at GoBowlingMinnesota.com. Look under the menu heading of "Minnesota High School Bowling." If you are navigating from a phone, you can click on the three white lines to access the website menu.
- 7) Communicate well with your bowlers or designate an adult affiliated with your team to do so. Pick a way to communicate with your bowlers/families (e.g. texting, emailing, Facebook group, etc.) and make sure everyone affiliated with your team knows where to get information about the team.
- 8) Make sure that all of your bowlers and their guardians are aware of the competition dress code.

Preseason checklist for head coaches and/or team managers

- 1) Reach out to your conference coordinator and confirm with them the names and contact information for all of your team's coaches and managers for the upcoming season.
- 2) Set up a meeting with the manager of your team's sponsoring bowling center to discuss details for the upcoming season.
- 3) If you have a relationship with your school, set up a meeting with the activities director or the community education department to discuss details for the upcoming season.
- 4) Create/edit a promotional flyer for your team. If you would like any free assistance with creating or printing a flyer for your team, reach out to Josh Hodney at josh@mhsb.org.
- 5) Reserve space or a table for recruitment purposes (school open houses; school orientations; community festivals; etc.)
- 6) Schedule an informational meeting for sometime in late July or early August. Create a flyer and/or turn it into a Facebook event. Ask your sponsoring bowling center if they will share the information on their website, via social media, and their email list.
- 7) Share your flyers about your team and informational meetings in community/city Facebook groups.
- 8) Read over the Minnesota High School Bowling rules, even if you "think" you are familiar with all league rules.
- 9) Be sure that you are CERTAIN what school all of your bowlers attend. Also, be aware of what school district any charter/private/online students attend.
- 10) If applicable, submit a school pairing request to the league's executive director and/or request any desired exemptions for bowlers to be eligible to bowl with your team/program.
- 11) Complete your SafeSport training or take a refresher course, if applicable.
- 12) Conduct a player and/or parent meetings. Send out communication via text, email, or an app. Make sure that all your bowlers and their guardians are aware of the competition dress code. Encourage all of your bowlers and guardians to read the league's rules.
- 13) Encourage bowlers and their guardians to patronize your team's sponsoring bowling center by purchasing food and drinks from them and/or by joining a league at the bowling center.
- 14) Make your bowlers and parents aware that their sponsoring bowling center is providing an incredible value to all high school bowlers. Bowlers are paying up to \$150 to participate in league bowling. Throughout the fall season of high school bowling, most participating bowling centers will donate the equivalent of several thousand dollars in free lineage for practices and competitions.

Tips & tricks for player recruitment

- 1) Get your high school's activities director or your district's community education director to recognize your bowling team as a student club (or student activity). PUBLIC schools associate the word "sport" with sports that are under the umbrella of the Minnesota State High School League (High School Bowling is administered by the Bowling Proprietors Association of Minnesota) so you will want to ask your (public) school to recognize the bowling team as a club/activity instead of a school sport. Once your team is recognized as a student club/activity, you will enjoy some/all of these benefits:
 - a. Appear in the high school and/or middle school year
 - b. Appear on the high school and/or middle school website
 - c. The opportunity to be included in school announcements (verbally and written)
 - d. Attend open houses (recruiting events)
 - e. Be able to hang up promotional flyers or posters
 - f. Bowlers may be eligible to letter
- 2) Allow anyone that is interested in joining the bowling team to come to one or two practices for free, without making a commitment. Allow them to meet some others on the team; to spend some time receiving instruction from the coaches; and to see if they enjoy the culture/atmosphere.
- 3) Make flyers about your bowling program. Put the flyers up at the bowling center and all middle and high schools that are part of your team (elementary schools if you allow 5th graders to practice too). Contact the schools to put the flyers in their family newsletters. You can also contact your school district's Community Education director to get the flyer put in their newsletter. (Credit: Park Cottage Grove)
- 4) Schedule one or two informational meetings in August or early September. Create a public Facebook event for the meeting and ask your bowling families to share it on Facebook.
- 5) Almost all cities/communities have Facebook groups. And most of these groups allow businesses and organizations to promote themselves one day a week (typically on Wednesdays). Utilize these groups to share information about your team in these groups.
- 6) Attend junior bowling leagues to make an announcement and hand out flyers. (Credit: Park Cottage Grove)
- 7) If you attend an open house at a school and are collecting names, have the parents write down the name and contact information. Most students have handwriting that is very difficult to read and if you cannot read the name or contact information that is provided you will miss out on a recruitment opportunity. (Credit: Mounds View)
- 8) Create a public Facebook group and/or page for your bowling team. Create an Instagram account also. Facebook will help reach parents and grandparents. Instagram will help reach students.
- 9) Share information about your team with the adult league bowlers at your sponsoring bowling center. (Credit: Sibley East)
- 10) If your local community has a newspaper, ask the editor to include information about your bowling team. (Credit: Sibley East)
- 11) Have your bowling team participate in your community parade (Credit: Sibley East)
- 12) Award a bowling ball to the current player that recruits the greatest number of new players. (Credit: Sibley East)

- 13) Organize one or more summer camps (or one day clinics) for kids going into 5th to 9th grade. Work with your local Community Education department to help you promote your program(s).

Tips & tricks for coach recruitment & development

- 1) Keep eyes and ears open for parents of current bowlers who may want to help out. Also, utilize alumni of the bowling program. (Park Cottage Grove)
- 2) Use team funds to pay for coaches to take classes and attend clinics
(credit: Sibley East)
- 3) Have a succession plan in place and update it at the beginning and/or end of every season. Many coaches quit coaching when their kid graduates and teams do not have a plan in place to transition to a new head coach. (credit: Lakeville South)
- 4) Coaches that are volunteers should look into Corporate Volunteer Programs. There are companies that will do a time matching grant - basically sending the school a check for the coach's time. The coach will probably only need to provide verification of their time by their school's activities director.
(credit: St. Croix Lutheran Academy)
- 5) Ask your pro shop operator if they have any ideas for people that may be interested in helping to coach and/or if they will display a flyer for you asking for volunteer coaches.
- 6) Ask your sponsoring bowling center to help you recruit coaches with flyers, emails, or social media posts.
- 7) There is a Facebook group called the Minnesota Bowling Message Board. This group has almost 4,000 members and may be a good place to recruit coaches.

Tips & tricks for effective communication

- 1) Use the schools for announcements (many have daily announcements and newsletters). Also, use an app to communicate with parents and players (e.g. GroupMe; BAND; or Teamreach).
(credit: Park Cottage Grove and Sibley East)
- 2) Give shoutouts to bowlers at practice/team meetings. Give shoutouts to bowlers/teams on your team app/communication tool. Give shoutouts to bowlers through their school newsletter or school announcements.
(credit: Park Cottage Grove)
- 3) Be very open with their parents about how bowling centers are not made for spectator sports so it may be very difficult to find a spot to sit or see.
(credit: Janesville Area)
- 4) Ask all bowlers and parents to share any complaints with their coach so the coach can contact the conference coordinator to help address or resolve the issue. This is much better than bowlers or parents complaining to the conference coordinator or posting complaints on social media.
(credit: Janesville Area)
- 5) Make an email distribution list of the PARENTS and send them weekly emails during the year with updates; who is on which teams, dates/location for matches, tournament qualification, etc. "Bowlers are informed at practices/matches about the next event on the calendar, but I communicate much more with the parents."
(credit: Mounds View)
- 6) Create a Power Point presentation that can be shown at parent meetings. Update the presentation every year. This will give parents clear direction on things they need to be aware of. It would like to see a sample of a Power Point presentation, let Josh Hodney know.
(credit: St. Croix Lutheran Academy)
- 7) Do a good job communicating with your activities director or Community Education contact. Always over communicate. They will appreciate it and keep our bowling program in a positive light with the school
(credit: St. Croix Lutheran Academy)
- 8) Practice patience and listening to others (may require a lot of trial and error).
(credit: St. Croix Lutheran Academy)
- 9) Create a parent group to support the team (organize rides for the kids; organize a team picnic; etc.) "We hold a team picnic after our first week of the season to help usher new parents into high school bowling. We accept suggestions for improvement.
(credit: St. Croix Lutheran Academy)
- 10) Create a school handbook and team contract that all bowlers and guardians sign about bowler etiquette and team expectations. (credit: Park Cottage Grove)

Tips and tricks for skill improvement

- 1) Drills are easy to find with google or YouTube.
(credit: Stillwater Area)
- 2) Coaches should spend the majority of their time with their less skilled/experienced players. "We try to teach our young bowlers the best fundamentals we can. They will eventually gain striking power. We never try to mold all into one style of player."
- 3) (credit: Stillwater Area)
- 4) Come up with fun skills/competitions that meet bowler needs/desires.
 - a. We do "circuits" (start at one corner pin and work your way across the front pins-----10, 6, 3, 1, 2, 4, 7)
 - b. Corner pin practice (hit the 6/10 and then the 4/7, but don't snipe the corners only)
 - c. Baker spare game (baker style bowling, but each frame needs to be filled or bowlers delete the game and start over (can also have "safe frames" like if they make it to frame 4 then after that delete only back to frame 4)
 - d. Baker strike game (same as spare game but only strikes)
 - e. No-step drills; one step drills; target shooting drills
 - f. Have a "strike fest" (all players line up on the same lane and take turns trying to strike. Strikers move to the next lane while those who missed stay on the first lane. Continue until there is one bowler who strikes to move on. Let them keep going until they miss.
 - g. Try "the gauntlet." Bowlers line up on both sides of a lane and make a bunch of noise while another bowler tries to throw a strike or spare).
 - h. Look up USBC drills at bowl.com.
(credit: Park Cottage Grove)
- 5) Reach out to college coaches and ask them for ideas (credit: Sibley East)

Tips & tricks for team fundraising

- 1) Set up an online store and sell bowling themed items with your school's name on it. (credit: Park Cottage Grove)
- 2) Ask local businesses and non-profits (VFW; American Legion; Lions Club; Rotary Club; etc.) for donations. (credit: Park Cottage Grove and Sibley East)
- 3) Run a garage sale. Ask each bowler/family to contribute one or more boxes of items to sell. Nearly every community has a "Buy Nothing" Facebook group where people give away items that they no longer want. Someone from your team could make a post in your local Buy Nothing group and ask for donations to your team's garage sale.
- 4) Run a bowling tournament or community bowling event at your team's sponsoring bowling center.
- 5) Offer bowling lessons with coaching fees going to your team. You could team up with your school's community education department on this.
- 6) Work with your bowling center to offer a spaghetti dinner for the community. You may be able to team up with a local non-profit like the Lions to promote and run the event together.
- 7) Organize a strike-a-thon and ask your bowler' to seek out donations from their friends and family members. People can make donations for a set amount or agree to donate X amount of money for each strike thrown (by the team or a specific bowler).
- 8) Ask your sponsoring bowling center if they are interested in you selling open bowling punch cards for them. (e.g. Sell punch cards good for 5 games of open bowling for \$25.00. The bowling center gets \$20 and the team gets \$5).

Tips and tricks for team building

- 1) Switch up the rosters for baker practice; split bowlers into baker pairs to compete against other baker pairs (try to make teams somewhat equal in skill); create lane assignments for practices and change them up each week.
(credit: Park Cottage Grove)
- 2) Offer "candy awards" each week at practice
 - a. Following all regular season competitions, any bowler who achieves 60% gets a Hershey Bar (the percentage could get adjusted based on a team's overall skill level)
 - b. Following all regular season meets, name the bowler with the highest spare percentage the "King or Queen Toblerone" and award them a Toblerone candy bar.
 - c. Coaches can hand out candy for smaller/special/specific accomplishments.
(Credit: St. Croix Lutheran Academy)
- 3) Ask a parent to coordinate a yearend party at your sponsoring bowling center. Offer fun year-end awards; have the parents and kids bowl together; and eat dinner together.
(credit: Mounds View)
- 4) Establish mentor programs where older kids help younger kids. Coordinate an off-site event and do a park cleanup as a team. Participate in your community's annual parade.
(credit: Sibley East)

Tips and tricks for maintaining a strong relationship with your sponsoring bowling center

- 1) Get to know the name of everyone that works at the bowling center. Always show appreciation for their efforts. Make their jobs as easy as possible. Encourage bowlers and families to purchase food and drink from the bowling center and do help the bowling center keep out any outside food or drink. Enforce all bowling center expectations.
(credit: Park Cottage Grove)
- 2) Meet with your sponsoring center's management in early or mid-July to come up with a detailed schedule. Discuss things that may come up during the season that may require you to ask for an adjustment to the schedule (e.g. your team typically bowls on Mondays, but you would like to skip Labor Day and practice on that Tuesday instead).
(credit: Mounds View)
- 3) Promote your sponsoring bowling center in a positive light and ask your bowlers and their guardians to do the same. Buy food and beverages from them often. Encourage your bowlers and parents to praise your sponsoring bowling center publicly verbally and on social media.
- 4) Donate time and energy to the sponsoring bowling center with work that needs to be done, such as painting or cleaning. (credit: Sibley East)
- 5) Host your end of season party at your sponsoring bowling center without asking for any/many discounts.
- 6) Organize a short season youth/adult league for January & February, and encourage your high school bowlers and their guardians to participate. (credit: Centennial)
- 7) Ask your sponsoring bowling center if there is anything that they would like to see your team do to show their appreciation.

Miscellaneous / other tips, tricks, and advice

- 1) Be flexible! It's okay to move bowlers around between varsity and JV. The more you can get varsity bowlers to partner with JV bowlers (especially at practice), the more cohesive the team will be. Nobody should have the "I'm too good to bowl with you" attitude. It is one team, whether varsity or JV. Be cheery and demonstrate positive sportsmanship. Lead by example and publicly recognize bowlers who do the same. (credit: Park Cottage Grove)
- 2) More often than not, the high school bowling programs with the greatest number of players are the most successful programs in terms of having high averages, and high winning percentages.
- 3) Put someone in charge of tracking and tabulating all of your bowlers' statistics. The conference coordinators do their best to be accurate, but mistakes do happen. Accurate statistics are important for determining all-conference team members and postseason rosters. (credit: Mounds View)
- 4) A coach's first year of post-season tournaments can be challenging, so for a new coach, I'd recommend that they find a "coaching buddy" in their conference who can help them navigate. There is a lot of institutional knowledge that a coach might not pick up until they have done it for a year or two, so a buddy can be helpful. (credit: Mounds View)
- 5) Have your team's coaches determine what responsibilities a team captain should have. We feel that the role should be developmental because we are teaching youth to lead. Instead of having players vote for team captains, we have players fill out an application. If their answers are good then they get a panel interview with multiple coaches and one or two sitting captains. Bowlers must be a junior or senior to be a captain in our program. (credit: St. Croix Lutheran Academy)
- 6) Have fun. Once it is not fun anymore, it is time to find a replacement coach and move on. (credit: St. Croix Lutheran Academy)
- 7) We highly recommended that when our kids reach 9th grade that they become junior coaches. We take them through level 1 training. They do not have any sort of certification but they are ready to coach basics to 5th & 6th graders. Typically, they also have the responsibility of setting the line-up for the teams they support. It gives them a sense of strategy and understanding in what their High School Coaches do. (credit: St. Croix Lutheran Academy)
- 8) As a coach, have a plan of succession even if its sharing with the program you run that you are moving on after 3-4 years. The parents and kids need to know and it gives time to get someone trained up. (credit: St. Croix Lutheran Academy)