

# **Pokémon League & Pokémon Club Tried & Tested: Our Best Practices**

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## **Investigating Success**

In recent months, Pokémon Organized Play has engaged in conversation with the store owners and League Leaders of its most successful League locations, intent on discovering exactly what it is that compels fans to return to these locations time and time again.

This investigation revealed several simple yet impactful factors that are easily replicable among Pokémon Leagues and Clubs globally—including yours! Please take some time to read through our findings and consider how these ideas can be applied or adapted in a way that suits your location.

Pokémon Organized Play wishes you the very best of success in the growth and development of your Pokémon League or Pokémon Club!

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## **Your League Experience**

Creating and maintaining a safe, fun atmosphere is of vital importance, especially for our youngest fans. Parents and guardians need to feel comfortable that what you are providing is suitable for their child—otherwise, you're unlikely to see that child return to your League.

As the owner of your League or Club, it is therefore critical that you set the tone with your League Leaders or Club assistants for how you expect them to interact with members of all ages, as well as their parents.

## Engaging Parents

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In many ways, the wide age range of players interested in Pokémon (and therefore in attending your League or Club) is unique in tabletop gaming. As a result, you will often find yourself engaging with parents of younger fans, particularly when they are new to your location.

Promoting open communication between staff and the attendees and their parents is crucial, as is demonstrating that you actively seek and act upon feedback regarding the League or Club. In addition, it is recommended that a League staff member find the time to sit down with a new member's parent and outline some of the policies and expectations in place at your location.

Do also point out the specific things your location does to make your youngest members feel safe and remain engaged—this will go a long way toward building parents' confidence in you, your staff, and your location as a worthwhile spot to bring their children!

## Engaging Attendees

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Because Pokémon appeals to players of all ages, League Leaders and Club assistants should take special care to help younger fans select activities that are appropriate to their age or development level.

While development happens at different rates for different people, there are some general guidelines that can help you determine which activity is the right fit for each of your younger members.

Be sure to look for signs of frustration from younger players, which could indicate that something is too difficult, so you can help them find a more enjoyable activity. Similarly, be on the lookout for members who seem bored or disengaged, and suggest something a little more challenging to them.

## Your Community

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Building a community is consistently reported as being the number-one driver for attendance at grassroots events and beyond. Pokémon players aren't just looking for a place to play a game; they're looking to interact with others who share their passion for Pokémon! While that extends throughout all the members of your League, it starts at the top with your facilitators—your League Leaders or Club assistants.

## Start at the Top

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Throughout our time interacting with high-performing Leagues, one consistent observation we have found is that the person (or people) facilitating League sessions is highly invested in delivering a quality, fun experience to League members. It doesn't matter whether the person in charge of the League is a longtime Pokémon Professor or a store employee; the common thread is that they're dedicated and passionate about Pokémon and about the experience of those attending the League.

The person you've selected to run your League or Club should therefore be professional, comfortable interacting with fans of all ages (and their parents), and sensitive to the unique needs of each of the many age groups you will see in your store.

## Identifying Coach Trainers

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One great way to supplement the familial atmosphere at your League or Club is to create an expectation that the older or more experienced players should assist with coaching newer members.

Making this a part of your standard activities and rewarding Coach Trainers for their participation will not only take some of the burden off the League Leader, but also bring your players closer and make them feel more engaged.

## Growing the Community

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### Social Media

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The primary method that most locations are using to promote their Leagues is social media. While younger kids typically do not have a social media presence, many of their parents or guardians do.

Parents often browse social and other digital media for activities suitable for their children, including activities related to specific interests, such as Pokémon. How you incorporate this into your social media strategy will be largely up to you, but carefully considering the target of your messaging will likely yield better results.

### Promotional Items

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Some successful League locations place promotional flyers or takeaway items on store counters or in shopping bags alongside purchases. The feedback we have received from these locations regarding the reception of these items is generally positive, and we therefore recommend that all locations consider this as part of their marketing strategy!

Pokémon Organized Play is investigating the possibility of providing such materials for you to use in your store.

## Your Policies

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To supplement a welcoming and inclusive environment, it is a good idea to consider implementing policies that help support and define your League or Club.

While Pokémon Organized Play suggests looking over the examples given below, setting expectations of your attendees in other areas—such as conduct and sportsmanship—may also help define your League in an encouraging, positive way for all.

## Entry Fees

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Pokémon Organized Play has discovered an approximate 50/50 divide among our most successful Leagues on the subject of entry fees.

While many League Leaders and store owners believe it's important for League attendance to be free of charge, others charge a nominal fee of around \$5, or the equivalent in local currency, per session. However, all locations that charge an entry fee have something in common: added value to the attendee, such as a booster pack or similar item that offsets the fee charged each week.

We found no discernible differences in League acquisition or retention among the stores we interviewed, regardless of their decision on whether to charge an entry fee.

## Fair Trading

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League locations with high recruitment and retention rates report success in implementing some sort of trading policy for the members of their League.

These policies go a long way toward making parents feel better about their children interacting with more experienced, potentially savvier League members, while also setting clear expectations for all players that the League is a fair and fun place for everyone.

The details of these policies and how they are administered varies among these Leagues, but the key theme is that trades are ultimately reviewed by a League official before they can be completed. In the case of younger members, the League Leader often also includes a parent in the discussion.

## Reporting Success

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Have you implemented any of these ideas at your League or Club location? Perhaps you have found success in something completely different that is not included here? Pokémon Organized Play would love to hear from you—we are always looking to celebrate success and connect stores around the world with the information they need to help their League or Club thrive!