

The Athletic Trainer's Survival Guide

How to run your program, show your value, and bring out your inner genius



'Be careful about your accessibility after-hours.'

Whether you're a new AT taking your first job, a seasoned pro, or somewhere in-between, here are some tips to help you be your best.

Develop a Plan of Care ATs work at the direction of a physician, and standing orders serve to outline your services in accordance with your state practice act and protect you from liability. Treatment modalities, emergency care, and reduction of joint dislocations are just a few items to consider. Update it annually and have it approved by your administration or Board of Education.

Practice Public Relations Developing a website, creating injury care take-home handouts, and calling parents when an injury occurs can go a long way to educate your school community about what you do. Check out our [PR Guide](#) for more ideas.

Update your policies Establish yourself as a school leader by taking the initiative to revisit some of your policies. For example, does your concussion policy address how to handle physician clearance notes inconsistent with your school protocol? Does your EAP cover how to handle mental health emergencies that may occur after school when most staff have left for the day?

Build relationships Establishing rapport with staff members is critical to an AT's success. For example, congratulate coaches on a big victory and show support when things don't go their way. Demonstrate your appreciation for a building maintenance employee or custodian with a gift card or holiday treats. Ask students about their school day. Be accessible to provide injury or wellness advice for your staff, or for one of their family members.

Take care of you Whether it's exercise, social interaction, reading for pleasure, gardening, a hobby, simply taking your dog for a walk, or binging a Netflix series, take time to forget you're an AT.

Show your numbers At the end of the season, share your injury and treatment statistics with administration and coaches. How many rehabilitation sessions did you provide that saved co-pays, insurance costs and inconvenience? Provide patient outcomes data to illustrate your treatment effectiveness. Conclude with tips for coaches to prevent injuries based on your findings. Use our [Treatment Sign-in QR code](#) to facilitate accurate sign-in numbers.



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Set limits Be careful about your accessibility after-hours for injury consultations. Work with administration to determine boundaries for weekend and holiday practices for life balance. For example, Saturday practices between 9am-12 only, is a reasonable approach. If necessary, use your statistics to demonstrate the need for additional staff.

Look the part It's important to set yourself apart from your patients, starting with the way you dress and look. Find out if your institution requires you to wear specific attire or if you have free rein. Either way, make sure your clothes look appropriate regarding length, neckline and fit. Remember, 'fashion follows function.' Make sure your outfit and shoe choice allow you to work comfortably and don't limit

Apply Evidence-Based Medicine

Set aside time each week to read journals in search of relevant research to enhance your daily practice. When you encounter a challenging injury, let that serve as motivation to learn more about it. ATGenius has developed numerous best practice papers to help get you started:

[AC joint injuries](#)

[Patella Dislocations](#)

[Plantar Fasciitis](#)

[Shin Pain](#)

[ACL Injuries](#)

[Shoulder Dislocations](#)

[Elbow UCL Injuries](#)

[Abdominal Injuries](#)

[Hip Apophyseal Injuries](#)

[Scapular Dyskinesia](#)

your abilities as an active AT.

Manage the volume Schedule appointments for patients who are unable to participate in their sport and need rehabilitation. Use our [Rehab Card](#) so patients don't need to ask you every few minutes what to do next while you're busy multi-tasking. Develop simple rehabilitation sheets for short-term injuries and keep them in a binder. Laminate the sheets so you can circle specific exercises for a patient with a dry erase marker and reuse. Create [rehabilitation videos](#) for home treatment between sessions when you're too busy to see all patients on a daily basis.

Lean on colleagues Seek advice from others when you encounter a tough situation, or when just need to hear a fresh perspective. You can also start a GroupMe for ATs to share ideas, ask questions or even post a position opening.

Participate in school activities outside of athletics Support the school musical, attend a cultural club activity, guest speak in a class, provide wellness tips for staff, or participate on the school safety committee. Students and staff will appreciate your interest and assistance.

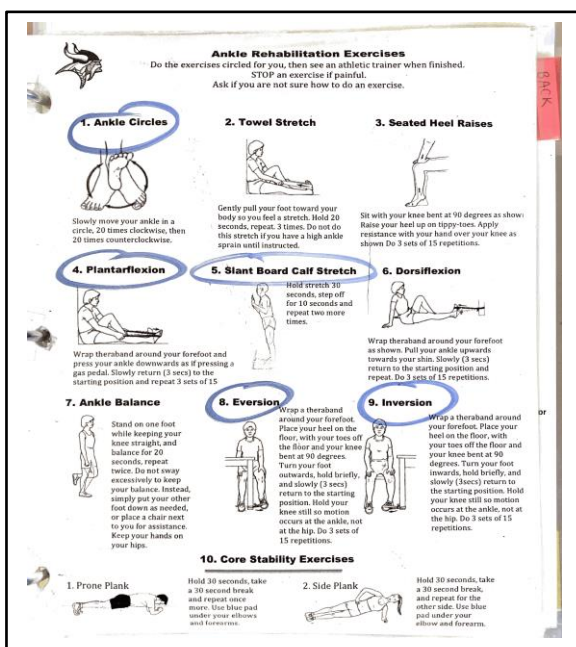
Develop a Physician Evaluation Form When referring patients for further evaluation, provide areas for the doctor to indicate the diagnosis, and return to participation recommendations. Include a checkbox where the physician can indicate the athlete may return to play at the athletic trainer's discretion as one of the options. Along with your contact information and credentials, include your NPI number to demonstrate you are a healthcare provider and peer. You can also list the equipment and services available at school for injury treatment and rehabilitation.

Utilize NATA Resources From ideas to educate the school community about athletic training to guidelines for developing a team physician agreement, the NATA provides several [documents](#) to help show your value, add staff, or even develop a sportsmedicine curriculum. Cultural, diversity and inclusion [resources](#) are also available.

Coach Communication

Busy athletic trainers need to find simple, effective ways to communicate with coaches while immersed in the dynamic environment of the AT facility. Solutions can vary from site to site, but being creative and resourceful can help lighten your workload. While sending text messages to coaches is one way to provide updates, here are some other ideas to reduce your afternoon texting burden so you can better focus on treating your patients.

- **Coaches notes** Create a simple half-sheet of paper to indicate the athlete's injury, status, treatment received, and the time the athlete left your office. This provides a line of communication and puts some responsibility on the athlete. Use it after completing a new injury evaluation, or providing a status change. See our [example](#) and customize to improve treatment sign-in accuracy.
- **In-person visits** Encourage coaches to stop by your facility on their way to practice for important updates. For adjunct coaches who may not always have time to do so, schedule a brief phone meeting on a regular basis.
- **Email made easy** Email weekly coaches reports from ATGenius. Always include some good news on the report such as those who have been cleared to participate. You can email other updates when appropriate such as progress notes and concussion RTP steps by clicking on the mail icon at the bottom right of the screen for these notes.



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About ATGenius

We know you're busy. And we also know that finding time to document injuries properly can be a challenge, especially with a line of athletes waiting to see you and games to cover.

ATGenius is an EMR system developed for athletic trainers by an athletic trainer to help you save time and stay organized. With our fluid design, you'll be more efficient, productive and up-and-running in no time. To learn more and start your 60-day free trial, go to [ATGenius.com](#) today!

Record Keeping Made Simple.