

## TOOLKIT

# No-Show Reducer

Confirmations, reminders, policies and refill routines that keep your calendar full.

| MON      | TUE   | WED      | THU | FRI      |
|----------|-------|----------|-----|----------|
| ✓        | ✓     | refilled | ✓   | moved    |
| ✓        | moved | ✓        | ✓   | ✓        |
| refilled | ✓     | ✓        | ✓   | refilled |
| ✓        | ✓     | moved    | ✓   | ✓        |

### AT BOOKING

Confirm + calendar

### 48 HOURS

Reminder

### 24 HOURS

Tap to confirm

### 2 HOURS

See you soon

30-page PDF

38 message templates

Tracker with cost calculator

27 linked sources

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01

# What the research says about no-shows

Reminders work, but modestly. The bigger gains come from stacking several small changes: how you book, when you remind, how easy it is to cancel, and what you do with the freed slot.

## How common are missed appointments?

Rates vary widely by setting, which is why your own number matters more than any benchmark. In healthcare, the published averages look like this:

23%

average no-show rate across 105 studies of medical appointments

Dantas et al., 2018

15.2%

mean missed rate in primary care across 19 studies (median 12.9%)

Parsons et al., 2021

\$196

average cost of one no-show at a large medical center, 2008

Kheirkhah et al., 2016

Private, paid-for services often run lower: one private orthodontic practice measured 2.43% across 1,193 appointments ([Wegrzyniak et al., 2018](#)). Measure your own.

## Why people miss

Four reasons come up again and again. Each one points to a different fix.

| Reason               | What the studies found                                                                                                                      | The fix it points to                                            |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| They forgot          | Over 40% of people who missed a GP appointment and answered a survey said they forgot ( <a href="#">Neal et al., 2005</a> )                 | Reminders, add-to-calendar, a booking that sticks               |
| Life got in the way  | Work, family or childcare, and transport were the most reported reasons across 12 studies ( <a href="#">Parsons et al., 2021</a> )          | A reminder early enough to reschedule, and an easy way to do it |
| Cancelling felt hard | A quarter said they tried hard to cancel or the time was inconvenient ( <a href="#">Neal et al., 2005</a> )                                 | One-tap reschedule links and replies that someone reads         |
| Feelings             | In 34 interviews, people named anxiety, feeling disrespected and not understanding the booking system ( <a href="#">Lacy et al., 2004</a> ) | Respectful tone, clear policy, no blame                         |

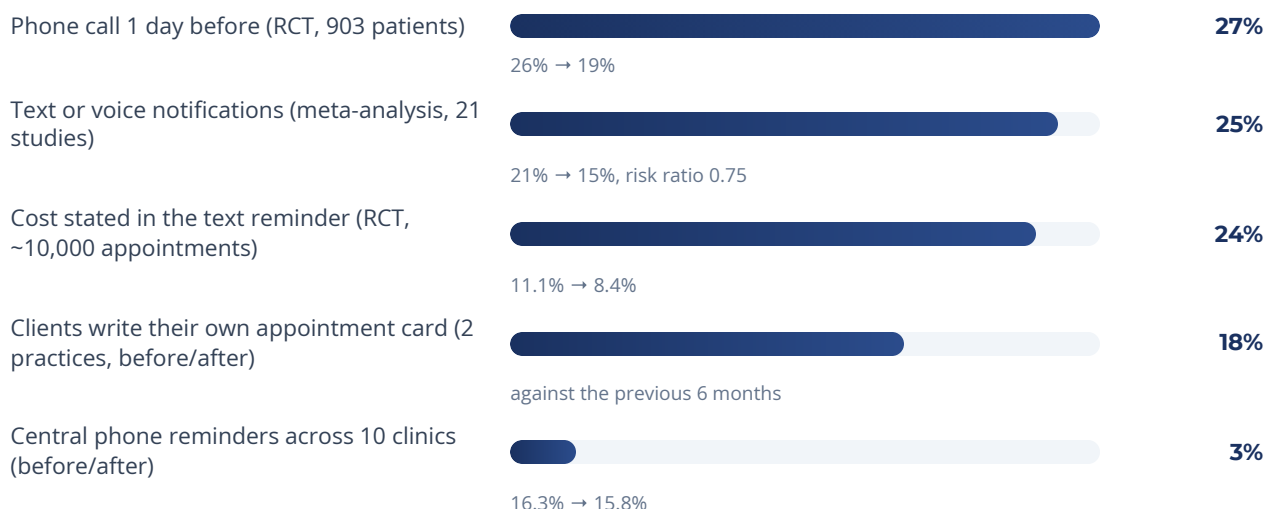
Two features predict no-shows more than any other in the literature: **a long gap between booking and appointment**, and **a history of missing before** ([Dantas et al., 2018](#)). In one clinic study, appointments booked 30 or more days ahead were missed 47% of the time, against 23% for those booked within 30 days. New patients missed more than returning ones, 30% against 21% ([Drewet et al., 2017](#)). You will use both facts to decide who gets extra attention.

## What works, and how much

### WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

A Cochrane review of 7 trials (5,841 people) found that text reminders raised attendance from 67.8% to 78.6%, a risk ratio of 1.14. Text reminders worked about as well as phone calls (80.3%), and the cost per attended appointment was 55% to 65% lower than calling. The evidence was rated moderate quality. — [Gurol-Urganci et al., Cochrane, 2013](#)

### Relative drop in no-shows, by intervention



Sources, in order: [Hashim et al., 2001](#); [Robotham et al., 2016](#); [Hallsworth et al., 2015](#); [Martin et al., 2012](#); [Kheirkhah et al., 2016](#). Note the last bar: ten clinics added central phone reminders and the rate barely moved. A reminder sent to everyone the same way, that nobody can act on, does little.

**Still unproven:** the best reminder timing (Chapter 4), whether fees help (Chapter 7), and almost anything outside healthcare. Of 61 behavioral studies in one review, 56 tested reminders ([Werner et al., 2023](#)).

# 02

## Measure your real no-show rate and what it costs

You can't manage a rate you haven't defined. Settle five outcome labels, log every appointment for four weeks, and you will know where the money goes.

### Use five outcomes, not two

"Showed" and "didn't show" hide the useful detail. Log every appointment with one of these outcomes:

| Outcome                | Definition                                                        | Can the slot be refilled?   |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Attended</b>        | The client came, even if late                                     | n/a                         |
| <b>No-show</b>         | Didn't come and didn't tell you before the start time             | Almost never                |
| <b>Late cancel</b>     | Cancelled inside your cut-off window (for example under 24 hours) | Sometimes, if you move fast |
| <b>Rescheduled</b>     | Moved to a new time with enough notice                            | Usually                     |
| <b>Cancelled early</b> | Cancelled with enough notice and not rebooked                     | Usually                     |

Then calculate three rates over the appointments that "reached the day": attended + no-shows + late cancels.

- **No-show rate** = no-shows ÷ (attended + no-shows + late cancels)
- **Late-cancel rate** = late cancels ÷ the same base
- **Lost-slot rate** = (no-shows + late cancels – slots you refilled) ÷ the same base

The lost-slot rate tracks money: a refilled late cancel cost you nothing; a no-show always costs you. And never delete no-shows to "clean up" the calendar; if your booking tool does, keep the log in the tracker.

### Look at the segments, not just the average

An average of 9% can hide a 20% problem in one place. The tracker splits your rate four ways. A high rate **by service** points to policy and deposits (Chapter 7). **By weekday or time**, to reminder timing (Chapter 4). **By lead-time band**, to check-ins and booking closer in (Chapters 4 and 10). **By reminder channel**, to channel choice and two-way replies (Chapters 5 and 6).

# Put a dollar figure on it

Use contribution, not price. If a no-show means you don't use \$8 of product, a \$90 appointment loses you \$82.

## SAY YOU RUN A PHYSIOTHERAPY CLINIC

600 appointments reach the day each month, \$90 average fee, \$5 of consumables per visit. Last month: 54 no-shows (9%) and 30 late cancels (5%), of which you refilled 9. The tracker's **Cost calculator** tab does this sum for you.

- Lost slots =  $54 + 30 - 9 = 75$  a month (12.5%)
- Lost contribution =  $75 \times (\$90 - \$5) = \$6,375$  a month, about **\$76,500 a year**
- Cutting no-shows from 9% to 6% saves 18 slots, or **\$1,530 a month**

## PREMIUM GYM: MEASURE THE OUTCOME THAT PAYS

A premium gym's first campaigns produced conversations quickly. The gym's sales team then told us which of them turned into members, and the answer was not the cheapest ones. Once the budget followed that verdict, cost per new member fell to its lowest, \$30, in month three. Same principle here: a booking isn't revenue until the client walks in, so log the outcome. [Read the project](#)

WORKSHEET

### Your baseline

|                                                 | Last 4 weeks |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Appointments that reached the day               |              |
| No-shows                                        |              |
| Late cancels                                    |              |
| Late cancels you refilled                       |              |
| No-show rate / lost-slot rate                   |              |
| Lost contribution per month (\$)                |              |
| Highest-rate service, weekday or lead-time band |              |



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