

A young man with short dark hair, wearing a white athletic jersey, is smiling at the camera. He is standing in front of a soccer goal. In the background, other players in white and blue jerseys are visible on a grassy field.

# Student-Athlete Recruitment

**TALK TO CURRENT COLLEGIATE ATHLETES TO UNDERSTAND THEIR COLLEGE EXPERIENCE. KNOW THAT YOUR LEVEL OF COMPETITION WILL POTENTIALLY DICTATE MUCH OF YOUR COLLEGE LIFE.**

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

*Most student-athletes have an opportunity to play their sport in college. Some teams accept all interested players while others are very selective. The one thing all levels of play at the college level have in common is that they require students to carefully manage their time to balance academic demands as well as team commitments. College athletes must meet academic requirements to earn and keep sports scholarships as well as to maintain eligibility to play their sport.*

**Let's take a closer look at the numerous opportunities to play sports in college!**

First, be sure to check the organization websites for your specific sport to learn the rules that apply to you, such as:

- When can college coaches initiate communication with you? This will vary by sport.
- Are there specific academic requirements that apply to you?
- How do official visits work? How many can you take? When can coaches invite you for an official visit?

**Intramural Sports:** Most colleges offer an opportunity for all students to participate in their favorite sports through intramural sports on campus. These teams typically accept all students. In fact, participation in intramural sports is a good way to stay fit, have fun, and meet other students. Intramural athletes compete with other teams from the same university. Sports include the traditional, such as basketball, soccer, and volleyball as well as the less traditional, such as dodgeball and frisbee golf.

**Intramural leagues give all students a chance to participate.**

**Club Sports:** Some schools offer club sports for their students to participate in. You are typically required to pay your own expenses to play on a club team and there are no scholarships offered. Athletes compete with club teams from other colleges and often compete at regional conferences in an attempt to bring home the national championship.

**BE OPEN TO  
ALL LEVELS OF  
COMPETITION!**

**Sports Associations:** The highest intensity of competition is typically found in teams managed by sports associations. The role of the various associations is to regulate and watch over college sports. It is important to get to know each association and how it might impact your life as a potential student athlete.

As a collegiate athlete, understand that you will likely travel around the country with your team and that you will, *at all times*, represent your school. For this reason, your character can oftentimes be as important as your athletic prowess in team selection.

**NCAA:** The National Collegiate Athletic Association is the largest and most well-known college sports association. The NCAA has three divisions, each of which carries its own regulations. There are 24 sports included in the NCAA and over 1,100 colleges participate each year. There are very specific academic requirements to participate in Division I (DI) or Division II (DII) of the NCAA.

If you are interested in playing either DI or DII in the NCAA, you should register with the NCAA Eligibility Center for an NCAA ID number during the beginning of your junior year. The organization will certify you academically and classify you as an amateur so that you can play college sports. The cost is \$65, and there are fee waivers available for those students who have also qualified for a fee waiver for the SAT or ACT.

The NCAA publishes a quarterly magazine entitled *Champion*. You might find it both informative and inspirational; the annual cost is \$12, and you can subscribe to it right off the NCAA website. You can learn more about the NCAA on the website: <http://www.ncaa.org/>.

**Division I:** DI colleges have high budgets and tend to offer the highest scholarships to play a sport in college, including a number of full scholarships to student athletes. This is the highest level of collegiate athletics and the most competitive. Training, competing, and travelling is more extensive and a greater commitment than any other collegiate level. **Think: This is my life.**

**Division II:** These athletic programs are typically smaller and less selective than DI teams. Many partial scholarships are offered by DII. Oftentimes, a partial athletic scholarship is combined with a partial academic scholarship in this division. The philosophy of balance between athletics, academics, and community involvement is key at DII schools. Division II athletes are often able to allocate more time to non-athletic endeavors. Training, competition, and time spent dedicated to a sport are not as intense. **Think: This is a balance.**

**Division III:** The largest division with the highest number of participants tops out at over 180,000 student-athletes. No athletic scholarships are allowed in NCAA DIII but other institutional aid or scholarships may apply; in fact, roughly 80% of DIII athletes receive some form of financial aid. DIII puts academics before athletics by requiring shorter practices and playing seasons and playing regionally instead of nationally. DIII colleges set their own admissions standards, and students are not required to register with the NCAA. Teams still compete at a high level, albeit a different caliber than DI and DII. Time commitment for Division III athletics is less than the other divisions, practice hours are more limited, and travel for competition is not a substantial time commitment. **Think: This is a very well-rounded college experience.**

**TWO IMPORTANT  
WORDS FOR THE  
PROSPECTIVE  
STUDENT-  
ATHLETE:**

**PLANNING AND  
PRACTICE!**

**NAIA:** The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics is the governing body for the athletic programs for over 250 mostly private and smaller colleges. The NAIA's focus is to build character in student-athletes through their participation in intercollegiate sports. NAIA sports programs tend to be smaller programs and require specific eligibility requirements to play. You can learn more about the NAIA on the website: <http://www.naia.org/>. Competitively, the NAIA is considered to be on par with NCAA Division III athletics. NAIA coaches often recruit more aggressively in order to compete with NCAA athletic talent, and the NAIA awards nearly \$500 million each year in athletic scholarships.

**NJCAA:** The National Junior College Athletic Association is a national program that was designed to foster inter-collegiate athletics at two-year universities. Student-athletes participating in these athletic programs have both eligibility and compliance from the organization to consider. You can learn more about the NJCAA on the website: <http://www.njcaa.org> .

**In whichever league you choose to play, be sure that you would be excited to attend the school if you weren't able to play your sport. There are all kinds of situations that could cause you to leave a team: injury, misbehavior, discontinued team/program, or change in coaching philosophy, for example.**

## **College Athletics by the Numbers**

- Fewer than 1 in 10 student-athletes who register for NCAA eligibility end up playing in college.
- Only about 2 percent (150,000) of high school athletes are awarded athletics scholarships to compete in college.
- There are more than 480,000 NCAA student-athletes, and fewer than 2 percent will go pro in their sport.
- Two-thirds of Division I and Division II student-athletes said they spend as much or more time on athletics during the offseason as during their competitive season. Division III athletes devote one half of their time to such activities.
- Athletes may spend anywhere from 4.4 to 8.6 hours on any given day of competition or practice which may include:
  - CARAs (Countable Athletically-Related Activities): Competition, practice, strength and conditioning, supplemental workouts, and film review
  - Uncountable activities: Academic meetings, nutrition sessions, media activities, team fundraising, compliance meetings, sports-psychology sessions, injury treatment/prevention

# Academic Planning for the Student-Athlete

Both the NCAA and NAIA dictate specific graduation requirements for student-athletes. As soon as you know that you are planning to play your sport in college, be sure to tell your high school counselor.

However, please **realize that it is your job to stay on top of meeting NCAA or NAIA academic coursework requirements**; do not count on your high school counselor or parents to do this for you — it is your future, not theirs. Check the website of the Sports Association you are looking at, then map out your four years. Review your progress each year and check for any revisions. If you aspire to play in the NCAA, you can send your transcript to the organization after junior year for an eligibility check.

## REMEMBER:

**FIRST YOU ARE  
A STUDENT;  
SECOND,  
YOU ARE AN  
ATHLETE.**

## Standardized Tests: SAT or ACT

If you are working toward being an early recruited athlete, you should be sure to plan for early SAT/ACT prep and be ready to take your first test by fall or winter of your junior year. Even if you continue studying and plan to retake the test later in the year, it will give coaches the assurance that you have your testing under control.

All potential college athletic recruits should choose to take the ACT or SAT with the optional essay - it is not optional for you! Some schools require the essay section with the SAT or ACT, and you would not want to be ineligible for admissions because of a missing essay. You never know what your athletic performance will be throughout junior or even senior year — a highly selective college that requires the essay could approach you as a potential recruit — and you want to be prepared.



GET AN  
**OBJECTIVE**  
OPINION.

FAMILY  
MEMBERS ARE  
TYPICALLY TOO  
CLOSE TO YOU  
TO GIVE YOU  
AN UNBIASED  
OPINION OF  
YOUR ABILITIES.

# Building Your Target College List with Athletics as a Key College Criteria

The process for student-athletes to build their college list is much like any other student. The only difference is that athletics is likely a Key College Criteria to add to the list of criteria.

Be sure to consider carefully when you prioritize athletics for yourself — is it the #1 criteria? Are you the type who can't imagine a day without your sport? Or, if you have a challenging major, you may be looking for a college where your sport is not quite so demanding. Here is a list of questions to ask yourself when determining the priority of your sport when building your college list:

- How important is the quality of the athletic facilities on campus?
- Do you prefer a long sports season or a shorter sports season?
- Is the coaching style important to you?
- Would you rather be a “big fish” in a “small pond” or vice versa when it comes to your sport?
- How important to you is it for the student body to attend games or competitions?
- Do you aspire to play your sport professionally someday?
- Look at the coach(es) bios:
  1. Would you want to play for that coach for a full four years?
  2. Have there been any coaching changes recently? Are these changes positive or negative?

## Athletic Video

You will find that providing coaches with video of your play is important for some sports more than others. Some coaches want to view your form and others want to see what you are doing when you don't have the ball in play — are you defending or taking on other roles?

Most students are now providing coaches brief video uploads to [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com). Realize that you do not need to have a professional videographer to record you — the classic mom or dad filming technique is typically fine.

Although gone are the days of hiring expensive videographers to make fancy DVDs, annotated and dubbed with music, it doesn't mean that you shouldn't organize your film into appropriate categories as you share with coaches — defense, offense, 500 meter dash, relay, etc. Sending video updates can be a great way to keep in touch with coaches!

## Athletic Assessment

**It is imperative to have a realistic assessment of your athletic skills before jumping into recruitment efforts with coaches.** Ask your coaches for their input and view college websites and media guides for records, stats, and rosters. Getting an independent assessment of your athletic abilities is key — ask private trainers, camp coaches and more. Parents can sometimes find it difficult to be objective.



## WHERE DO COLLEGE COACHES FIND ATHLETES?

RECRUITING SITES:  
MAX PREPS, NCSA,  
RIVALS.COM,  
247SPORTS.COM

HIGH SCHOOL  
OR CLUB SPORT  
COACHES'  
RECOMMENDATIONS

COMMUNICATIONS  
FROM INDIVIDUAL  
RECRUITS:  
PROACTIVE  
OUTREACH EMAILS/  
TEXTS

CAMPS AND/OR  
SHOWCASES HOSTED  
BY COLLEGES: WWW.  
NCSASPORTS.ORG/  
EVENTS

LARGER NATIONAL  
TOURNAMENTS:  
OFTEN HOSTED BY  
SPORTS' NATIONAL  
GOVERNING  
ORGANIZATION OR  
ASSOCIATION

**IMPORTANT!**  
IT IS RARE FOR  
COLLEGE COACHES  
TO ATTEND  
INDIVIDUAL HIGH  
SCHOOL OR CLUB  
ATHLETIC EVENTS,  
UNLESS THEY HAVE A  
PARTICULAR RECRUIT  
IN MIND. *DO NOT  
EXPECT COACHES TO  
FIND YOU ON THESE  
OCCASIONS.*

Be sure you know your academic stats as well as your athletic stats. Many student-athletes can list all their sports rankings and accomplishments, but when asked their GPA or SAT/ACT test scores, they draw a blank. It shows what value students place on these areas of their life; coaches like to see that students value their education as well as their athletics.

### Make a note of the following:

- How do you rank compared to your peers?
- How do you rank nationwide?
- What are your weaknesses on the field/court?
- What are your strengths? What would you bring to the team?
- Consider all levels of play NCAA (DI II, and III), NAIA, NJCAA

### How does your performance compare with college teams? Complete the attached worksheet for each target college.

- Look at the roster: How do you compare (weight, height, speed, etc.)?
- Look at the team stats by position and year and consider the following questions:
  1. If you were to join the team as a first-year student, how many people will you have to compete against for your position?
  2. How many years will you be competing for the same position?
  3. How do you compare in statistics? For example, if all of the players in your position are seniors, this is good news! This means the coach is likely heavily recruiting for your position.

## Approaching Recruitment

Recruiting is not something that lands in your lap. It doesn't just happen as a product of your athletic successes. Collegiate athletic recruitment is, rather, a product of the planning and effort a student-athlete puts in outside of practice and competition.

Traditionally, most collegiate coaches approach their recruitment process as a funnel. They begin at the top of the funnel with a large pool of student athletes who they believe could be well-suited for their team. The initial net cast by coaches can be rather broad — with looser requirements and a broader range of athletic profiles than they may end up with further down their recruitment timeline.

The top of the funnel may have thousands of potential recruits, all of whom may have various levels of skill, experience, and prowess. Coaches will look at basic standards such as height, weight, position or event, and graduation year in order to map out who may be a good fit for their program.

Just as college coaches view this process, you should approach recruitment like a funnel as well. Begin your search with as many college programs that you believe could be great fits — academically, culturally, and athletically—and narrow down from the top of this funnel.