

## College Athletics Guide

*Want to play sports in college? Here's what you need to know!*

The college athletic recruitment process should begin early. If you are in 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grade, it may be time to start. If you wait to start the process in 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade, it may be too late!

### Getting Started

Follow these steps to get started on the college athletic recruitment process...

- 1) **Determine goals.** Why do you want to play sports in college? What are you looking for in your overall college experience? Do you want to spend the majority of your time attending practices and competitions? Do you want more of a balance with academics? Do you want to earn a sports scholarship? The “Sports Divisions” table & “Reality of College Athletics” sections in this packet might help you figure out what you really want.
- 2) **Put together your materials.** Once you know the sports division(s) you are interested in, it's time to create an athlete profile and register with any of the required eligibility sites. Most students will need to create a 1-page athletic resume and recruitment video highlighting their talents and achievements. Students who have set their sights on NCAA recruitment must register with the NCAA Eligibility Clearinghouse ([eligibilitycenter.org](http://eligibilitycenter.org))
- 3) **Research.** Research colleges that meet your athletic needs and academic profile. Remember, academics matter! Between eligibility requirements and the competitiveness of college admissions, schools don't have a lot of leeway if a student's grades and/or scores are below their average – yes, even if that student is an amazing athlete!
- 4) **Reach out.** Contact coaches at schools that interest you. Be proactive by sending emails and making phone calls. Follow-up if you don't hear back at first. Send along your athletic profile. Coaches care about personal relationships and reputation. Be friendly, professional, and honest in your communication with them. Also, pay attention to your social media accounts. Coaches often check those without telling you!

## Sports Divisions

Colleges belong to specific sports divisions. As you decide which division you'd like to join, it's important to know the differences between them. Check out the table below for more info:

NCAA Division I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are eligible for sports scholarships</li> <li>• To be recruited, students must enroll with the NCAA Eligibility Clearinghouse: <a href="http://eligibilitycenter.org">eligibilitycenter.org</a></li> <li>• Students must meet GPA and SAT requirements to be eligible</li> <li>• Often viewed as the highest, most competitive level of college athletics</li> <li>• Requires the greatest time commitment from student athletes</li> </ul>
NCAA Division II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are eligible for sports scholarships</li> <li>• To be recruited, students must enroll with the NCAA Eligibility Clearinghouse: <a href="http://eligibilitycenter.org">eligibilitycenter.org</a></li> <li>• Students must meet GPA and SAT requirements to be eligible</li> <li>• Requires a serious time commitment from student athletes (in many cases, the same as NCAA Division I)</li> </ul>
NCAA Division III	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are <i>NOT</i> eligible for sports scholarships (though they can qualify for merit and need-based aid)</li> <li>• Students do <i>NOT</i> need to enroll with the NCAA Eligibility Clearinghouse</li> <li>• Students must meet GPA and SAT requirements as determined by each school</li> <li>• Requires a serious time commitment but also allows students to focus on their academics and have a more balanced college experience</li> </ul>
NAIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of play is typically between NCAA Division II and III</li> <li>• The recruitment process is simpler than the NCAA: no clearinghouse and fewer restrictions on contact with coaches</li> <li>• Students must register with NAIA Eligibility Center to be able to play: <a href="http://www.playnaia.org/">http://www.playnaia.org/</a></li> <li>• Schools in this division tend to be small in size</li> </ul>
NJCAA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This division is made up of 2-year and junior colleges (i.e. community colleges)</li> <li>• 3 Divisions: Division 1 can offer full athletic scholarships. Division II can offer partial athletic scholarships. Division III cannot offer athletic scholarships but can offer need-based and merit aid.</li> <li>• For more information about eligibility, check out: <a href="http://www.njcaa.org/eligibility/index">http://www.njcaa.org/eligibility/index</a></li> </ul>

## The Reality of College Athletics

Many high school students are not fully aware of what it's like to be a college athlete. Here is some information to keep in mind:

- Students competing in NCAA Division I sports often practice 6-7 days per week. Practices last several hours. Additional conditioning is also often required. Students center their course schedules around their athletics and spend a large amount of time off campus competing in their sport. Many consider Division I athletics to be a full-time job.
- Division II athletes often have a similarly demanding practice schedule as Division I.
- Division III athletes can expect to practice 4-6 days per week. However, Division III schools often make an effort to give student athletes more of a balance between sports and classes.
- All student athletes, no matter their athletic division, may be required to follow a specific work-out routine and abide by certain restrictions not given to other students (ex. no alcohol consumption)
- If a student attends college on a sports scholarship but becomes ineligible to play (ex. low grades), his or her scholarship could be cancelled
- There are other ways to play sports in college than joining a varsity team! Most colleges offer club-level sports, where students practice 2+ days per week and compete against athletes at other colleges. Most colleges also offer intramural sports. Intramural sports require a minimal commitment (usually 1-2 days per week) and are a fun way for students to compete against their peers in a low-key environment.

### Additional Resources

To learn more about college athletics & the recruitment process, check out the following resources:

- NCAA's website for future college athletes: <http://www.ncaa.org/student-athletes/future>
- NCAA recruitment fact sheet:  
<http://www.ncaa.org/sites/default/files/Recruiting%20Fact%20Sheet%20WEB.pdf>
- NAIA website: <http://www.naia.org/>
- NJCAA website: <http://www.njcaa.org/>