



Quick Facts: Athletic Scholarships

Athletic scholarships are available at NCAA Division 1 and Division 2, NAIA and junior colleges, but not at Division 3. Most are partial scholarships. To get an athletic scholarship, you must meet eligibility rules, build recruiting relationships and position yourself as a strong academic and athletic fit.

- Fewer than 2% of high school athletes receive NCAA athletic scholarships.
- Most athletic scholarships are partial, not full rides.
- **Division 3 schools do not give athletic scholarships.**
- **Division 2 schools do offer athletic scholarships**, typically partial awards.
- Division 1 scholarship rules changed beginning in 2025–2026, allowing more flexibility in how aid is distributed.
- Academic aid and need-based aid can be combined with athletic scholarships.

HOW TO GET AN ATHLETIC SCHOLARSHIP (STEP-BY-STEP)

If you're asking **how to get an athletic scholarship**, follow these steps:

1. COMPETE AT A HIGH LEVEL

Compete against strong competition and consistently improve measurable performance metrics.

2. MAINTAIN STRONG ACADEMICS

Higher GPAs and test scores improve recruiting appeal and qualify you for additional academic aid.

3. REGISTER WITH THE ELIGIBILITY CENTER

Division 1 and Division 2 athletes must register with the NCAA Eligibility Center. NAIA athletes must register separately.

4. BUILD A STRONG RECRUITING PROFILE

Include verified stats, updated highlight video and academic information.

5. CONTACT COLLEGE COACHES PROACTIVELY

Send personalized emails, complete recruiting questionnaires and attend exposure events.

6. UNDERSTAND ROSTER LIMITS IN YOUR SPORT

With new Division 1 roster caps, evaluate how many spots are realistically available.

7. CREATE LEVERAGE WITH MULTIPLE OFFERS

Multiple recruiting interests may strengthen your negotiating position.

8. BE STRATEGIC ABOUT DIVISION LEVEL

Sometimes a Division 2 or NAIA program may offer more scholarship money than a lower-tier Division 1 opportunity.

HOW DO YOU GET A FULL-RIDE ATHLETIC SCHOLARSHIP?

To get a full-ride athletic scholarship, you must compete at an elite level, fill a high-impact role on a team, maintain strong academics and generate recruiting interest from multiple schools. Full rides are rare—only about 1% of athletes receive one—and are most common in select Division 1 sports.

To improve your chances:

- Stand out at a key position.
- Perform consistently against top competition.
- Maintain strong academics.
- Create leverage with multiple offers.
- Be realistic about division fit.

Sometimes athletes receive larger scholarship packages at the Division 2 or NAIA level than at certain Division 1 programs.

SCHOLARSHIP AVAILABILITY BY DIVISION

Division	Athletic Scholarships Offered?	Typical Structure
NCAA Division 1	Yes	Full and partial (varies by sport)
NCAA Division 2	Yes	Primarily partial scholarships
NCAA Division 3	No	Academic and need-based aid only
NAIA	Yes	Partial and full scholarships
NJCAA	Yes	Varies by program

DO DIVISION 2 SCHOOLS OFFER ATHLETIC SCHOLARSHIPS?

Yes. Division 2 schools offer athletic scholarships, primarily partial awards.

DO DIVISION 3 SCHOOLS GIVE ATHLETIC SCHOLARSHIPS?

No. Division 3 schools do not offer athletic scholarships. D3 schools only offer non-athletic scholarships, like academic scholarships.

DO IVY LEAGUE SCHOOLS GIVE ATHLETIC SCHOLARSHIPS?

Ivy League schools do not offer athletic scholarships. They provide need-based financial aid only. Coaches may support recruits in admissions but do not award athletic scholarship money.

HOW IVY LEAGUE FINANCIAL AID WORKS

Ivy League schools often meet most or all of demonstrated financial need:

- Families earning under **\$65,000** typically are not expected to contribute to tuition.
- Families earning between **\$65,000 and \$180,000** may contribute roughly **10%–18% of household income**, depending on circumstances.

Because aid is based on financial need, not athletic ability, many families receive substantial support.

Don't let the lack of athletic scholarships deter you. In many cases, an Ivy League financial aid package can be just as competitive as a partial athletic scholarship elsewhere.

HOW MUCH SCHOLARSHIP MONEY CAN YOU GET?

Fewer than 2% of high school athletes receive NCAA athletic scholarships, but billions of dollars are awarded annually across Division 1 and Division 2 programs.

Most scholarships are partial awards. Coaches decide how to distribute their allocated funds based on:

- Team needs
- Roster depth
- Position value
- Budget constraints

➔ *Negotiation may be possible if you have multiple offers.*

WHAT DO ATHLETICS SCHOLARSHIPS COVER?

An athletic scholarship may cover:

- Tuition and mandatory fees
- Room and board
- Required course-related books
- Academic supplies
- In some cases, additional cost-of-attendance stipends

Scholarships can be either **full** or **partial**, depending on the sport, school and coach's allocation strategy.

TYPICAL ATHLETIC SCHOLARSHIP AWARD SIZES

Level	Typical Award Size	Notes
Division 1	Partial to full tuition	Full rides more common in select sports
Division 2	Partial tuition awards	Full rides uncommon but possible
NAIA	Partial to substantial awards	Often competitive financial packages
Junior College	Varies widely	May include tuition and housing

NCAA DIVISION 1 SCHOLARSHIP & ROSTER LIMIT CHANGES (2025–2026)

Beginning in the 2025–2026 academic year, Division 1 schools that opt into the new model must follow **sport-specific roster limits**. These limits replace previous scholarship caps in many sports and significantly change how programs may distribute aid.

Under the previous structure, many sports operated under scholarship limits (either headcount or equivalency caps). Under the new structure, roster size is capped instead.

This creates potential for:

- Expanded scholarship distribution flexibility
- Reduced walk-on opportunities in some sports
- Increased competition for roster spots
- Strategic reallocation of scholarship dollars

Below is a breakdown of the transition from previous scholarship limits to new roster limits for Division 1 programs that opt in.

Sport	Previous scholarship limit	New roster limit	Potential scholarship expansion*
Baseball (M)	11.7	34	+22.3
Softball (W)	12	25	+13

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR RECRUITS

The new roster limits do **not automatically guarantee more scholarships**. Instead:

- Schools may choose how many roster spots to fund.
- Some programs may shift from walk-ons to partial scholarship models.
- Scholarship distribution may become more strategic and position-based.

Athletes should ask coaches:

- Are you opting into the new roster structure?
- How many roster spots are funded?
- Will walk-on positions still exist?
- Has your scholarship distribution strategy changed?

Understanding these details is critical when learning **how to get an athletic scholarship** in today's recruiting landscape.

WALK-ONS AND ROSTER LIMITS

Many athletes compete without scholarships.

TYPES OF WALK-ONS

- **Preferred Walk-On:** Recruited without scholarship aid
- **Traditional Walk-On:** Tries out after enrollment

With Division 1 roster limits, some programs may:

- Reduce walk-on positions
- Convert walk-on spots into partial scholarships
- Carry smaller overall rosters

Division 2, Division 3 and NAIA schools are not governed by the same Division 1 roster caps.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR ATHLETIC SCHOLARSHIPS

To qualify for NCAA Division 1 or Division 2 athletic scholarships, athletes must:

- Complete required core courses
- Meet minimum GPA standards
- Maintain amateur status
- Register with the NCAA Eligibility Center

Eligibility allows participation but does not guarantee scholarship offers.

SCHOLARSHIP AGREEMENTS: VERBAL OFFERS & RENEWALS

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU GET A VERBAL SCHOLARSHIP OFFER?

A coach may decide to extend a verbal scholarship offer at various points in the recruiting process. However, these offers are non-binding; they are unofficial verbal contracts between a coach and athlete. Nothing is set in stone until the student-athlete signs their financial aid agreement.

CAN AN ATHLETIC SCHOLARSHIP BE TAKEN AWAY?

Most athletic scholarships are one-year agreements that must be renewed annually. A scholarship may not be renewed for several reasons, including:

- Coaching changes
- Performance concerns
- Academic ineligibility
- Conduct violations
- Roster management decisions

Multi-year scholarship agreements do exist, but they are not standard across all programs or divisions.

OTHER SCHOLARSHIP OPTIONS

Since most athletic scholarships are partial, athletes should explore:

- Academic scholarships
- Institutional merit aid
- Federal aid (FAFSA)
- Outside scholarships from corporations and nonprofits

Academic scholarships are much more secure than athletic scholarships. You can lose your athletic scholarship due to injury or poor performance, but as long as you maintain your grades, you will keep your academic scholarship even if you are no longer playing.

GET EXPERT GUIDANCE ON ATHLETIC SCHOLARSHIPS

Navigating the athletic scholarship process can be complex, especially with recent NCAA changes and evolving recruiting rules.

If you want personalized guidance:

- Attend recruiting workshop
- Speak with a recruiting coach
- Create a free recruiting profile to connect with college coaches

Your recruiting journey is unique. Getting accurate information and expert support can help you maximize your opportunities and make informed decisions about athletic scholarships.