



WHEN DOES THE RECRUITING PROCESS START?

For most athletes, the recruiting process should start **before junior year**. For top prospects, it can begin as early as **freshman year**.

College coaches, especially at competitive program, are starting earlier every year. They often scout freshman with varsity or elite club experience, strong tournament rankings, or major awards like All-State honors. If that sounds like you, you're likely ready to start the process in 9th grade.

Team sports tend to recruit earlier than individual sports, with programs in major conferences like the Big Ten or SEC moving the fastest.

If you hit your stride later, say during sophomore year, that can still be a great time to begin. The key is to start early enough to build relationships with coaches, research schools, and get your recruiting materials ready.

Many families assume recruiting starts when athletes reach out to coaches. But a successful process begins well before that, with researching programs, creating a standout profile, and understanding your goals.

Taking initiative is one of the best ways to get noticed. Don't wait, be proactive and start laying the groundwork now.

UNDERSTANDING THE RECRUITING FUNNEL

Understanding how to get recruited starts with learning how college coaches look at recruiting. Think of the process like a funnel.

At the top of the funnel, thousands and thousands of potential recruits of various levels are tossed in.

Coaches begin initial evaluations—focusing on basic requirements like height, weight, grad year and position.

Then, coaches send out correspondence to those they've identified as potential fits to see if there's mutual interest.

The funnel is beginning to narrow. Evaluations continue with the smaller class of potential recruits, which narrows it down even further.

Near the bottom of the funnel, coaches are inviting recruits on official visits and extending offers.

HOW RECRUITS CAN GET ON A COLLEGE COACH'S RADAR

Getting noticed by college coaches requires student-athletes to take initiative. This starts with an introductory email that allows coaches to get to know an athlete, their academic and athletic achievements and why they are interested in the program.

For getting on a coach's radar, body language, coachability, positive leadership, and good energy on the court are all important.

For most sports, sending highlight videos to coaches is also important. You should understand:

- When and why you should send your recruiting video to coaches
- Who to send your highlight or skills video to
- How many times should you follow up with coaches after sending your highlights
- Tips for sharing your highlight or skills video on social media

LEVEL SET BASED ON YOUR INTERESTS, TALENT AND EXPECTATIONS

Getting an objective view of how you stack up against other student-athletes is an invaluable component of the recruiting process—and often one of the toughest parts of the process as families learn more about how to get recruited.

There's no point in striving for a DI scholarship if you don't have the size or skills to compete at that demanding level.

There are a couple ways to figure out how you rank: researching college rosters and being evaluated by a third party recruiting services where you can **get a free evaluation**.

Most importantly, you should be honest with yourself about your desire to compete at the college level. It's nothing like high school; everything is more intense, from training to the competition itself.

LEARN ABOUT THE DIFFERENT DIVISION LEVELS

Once you've determined your level of interest, talent and expectations surrounding college athletics, it's important to consider the various division levels available to compete in:

- **NCAA Division I**—This is the highest level of college athletics and, thus, the most competitive. D1 schools typically have large budgets, expensive facilities, and the student-athletes are expected to train and travel extensively.
- **NCAA Division II**—While still a competitive division, D2 athletes are provided more balance in their lives, as training and competition for Division 2 schools aren't as intense. Scholarships are also offered at this level.
- **NCAA Division III**—No athletic scholarships are offered for D3 student-athletes, but there are many other forms of financial aid. The competition levels at Division 3 schools are still very high, but practice seasons are shorter, and there's more of an academic focus.
- **NAIA**—A much smaller community than the NCAA—with a little over 250 schools—the **NAIA** is a great option for student-athletes who love their sport but are looking for a smaller or private college, or a specific major.
- **NJCAA**—Junior college (JUCO) is a good option for the student-athlete looking to get a sense of what college athletics are like at a two-year institution before transferring to a four-year college. Many student-athletes compete at the JUCO level because they are working on their NCAA eligibility or are trying to save money before transferring to a four-year college.
- **NCCAA**—A community of Christ-centered institutions with nearly 100 schools, the NCCAA is a great option for student-athletes looking for a faith-based education while competing in the sport they love. Athletic scholarships are offered at the NCCAA Division I level. The NCCAA Division II level is not permitted to offer athletic scholarships, but there are other forms of financial aid.
- **USCAA**—The USCAA is a national governing body that provides quality intercollegiate athletic competition on a national level. With approximately 80 member institutions nationwide, student-athletes have the opportunity to compete for National Championships as well as student-athlete recognition.

UNDERSTAND ACADEMIC ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Academic eligibility is one of the most important aspects of the recruiting process and can be overlooked by families who aren't sure how to get recruited.

There are different eligibility requirements for NCAA, NAIA and JUCO schools—and each school will also have its own entrance requirements—so it's crucial to actively work to maintain your grades. A great GPA and/or standardized test score can be the difference-maker between you and another recruit.

A college coach wants to fill their roster with athletes who will work hard. If you can prove you have the academic chops, they have less to worry about. Being academically sound will also open more doors for you scholarship-wise.