

Softball Recruiting 101

The Do's and Don'ts of Recruiting Plus
Testimonials from Top Collegiate Players!

Introduction

Every softball player reaches a point where they must decide if they want to continue playing in college. It can be an exciting and challenging time period. Top softball players from across the country have shared their insights about their own recruiting experiences. Whether your aspiration is to play Division 1, Division 2, Division 3, or NAIA college softball, this presentation will provide valuable information. A college degree is the overall goal, and you must remember that there is a school out there for EVERYONE. Scholar-athletes are not discovered. Learning how to be proactive in the recruiting process is crucial. We hope you find this helpful and relevant throughout your recruiting process.

Where to Start?

Congrats! You've officially decided to pursue playing college softball. There are a few simple tasks that must be complete prior to sending emails to schools across the country:

First, create an email account to contact coaches. Make sure that your address is professional. Keep in mind that coaches are educators, and first impressions are key. An email address with your last name in it will help coaches recognize who is sending them information. For example, if your name is Lisa Smith, softballbabe22@aol.com is not the best choice. Instead, try lsmith22@aol.com.



Next, you need to draft a generalized email to send to each school. This should include:

- your name
 - year in school
 - positions
 - bat/throw lefty or righty
 - GPA/Class Rank/ACT/SAT
 - high school
 - high school coach's name and number
 - summer team
 - summer coach's name and number
 - high school schedule (for local universities)
 - summer schedule (include all major exposure tournaments)
- ***if you do not know the dates for these tournaments, let the coaches know that you will send them the updated information at a later date



The information from the previous bullet points should be in paragraph format. DO NOT USE text "lingo" or abbreviations. Coaches are not your peers. Have someone proofread your email draft to ensure there are no spelling or grammatical errors.



Now it is time to pick schools where you would like to play softball. You should not narrow down choices because of distance unless it is a personal preference. Many athletes assume there is no way they could play at a school across the country. Don't do this to yourself! If you like Washington or Alabama, then send emails to their coaches. It can't hurt!

We suggest that you send out letters to schools from a variety of conferences. An easy way to start is to pick out at least two schools from the different conferences across the country (SEC, PAC 10, BIG 12, BIG 10, WAC, Ivy League, etc.)


After deciding which softball programs to contact, it is now time to explore each school's website and find the email address of the coach in charge of recruiting. Most schools have their assistant coaches deal with recruits, so expect your emails to be sent to them.


At this point in time, you must personalize your emails. The paragraph you already drafted only requires a few additions (see example below). **MAKE SURE YOU ARE ADDRESSING THE CORRECT COACH.** Mixing up schools and coaches will not only be embarrassing, but also give a poor first impression. Your email will look something like this:

Coach _____,

"My name is _____ and I am very interested in your softball program at _____ (put their college name)." ***Here you insert your original email draft with the information we discussed. You may then close with a statement like "I hope you find I am talented enough for your program and good luck with the upcoming season."

Sincerely,
Lisa Smith

 Be sure to save your original email draft on Microsoft Word or another program. You may later send schools emails that were not originally considered.

 Stay organized! You do not want to send repeat emails to schools. Keep an email file of any communication.

It is important to note that a college coach cannot respond to a player's email until September 1st of their junior year of high school due to NCAA rules. This does not mean a freshman in high school should not send emails. The earlier the better! If you take the time to send an email with your summer schedule, they WILL come watch you if possible. YOUR job is to keep their attention. Schools CAN send you information on their camps at any age. They often follow up on emails they have received from "underage" athletes. Attending a camp shows interest in a program. It also provides the opportunity to interact with the coaches and players.

If you are a junior in high school and a coach responds you need to analyze their level of seriousness. Assume that all responses are positive unless you hear otherwise. Follow up with any school that responds.

Visiting Schools

Unofficial Visit:

These visits are typically taken by sophomores and juniors, but are open to any high school athlete. Unofficial visits are taken at your own expense. All travel and accommodations are paid for by you. Unofficial visits are great ways to meet coaches and view practices/games. Take as many as you can afford (time and money permitting) before making your decision.



Official Visit:

An official visit consists of a university paying for all expenses of the recruit for a 48-hour period of time (plane ticket, gas money, hotel, food, etc.). These visits can only be taken by high school seniors. Each athlete is allowed 5 official visits, but most players have committed by their senior year. If you have not committed, then try to take as many visits as possible!

Meeting with a Coach

As a family, sit down and discuss questions to ask the coaching staff of the university that you are about to visit. Remember, there are no dumb questions. Parents, let your daughter do most of the talking. Coaches want to gauge maturity and interest levels of the athlete. At the end, if you have more questions, feel free to ask. The first time you meet with a coach, questions should be asked that give your family a general feel about the university. It's almost like a "getting to know each other better" session. Also, make sure to check rosters to see if players in your position will be graduating or not.

Here are a few questions that are frequently asked during visits:

- Do you let freshman play?
- How do you run practices?
- What is the team GPA? Graduation Rate?
- Where do you see the program in the next 3-4 years?
- Will you be coaching here in the next 3-4 years? Or will your contract be up?
- Do most players live on campus all 4 years?
- What percentage of freshman end up playing for all 4 years?

As things progress with a school, you will reach a point where more detailed questions should be asked. This may or may not come before a scholarship is offered. These type of questions should be asked specifically about you. Again, do not shy away from certain questions. It is important to get everything out in the open.

Examples of personal questions:

- How many players are you recruiting?
- How many in my position?
- Where do you see me playing?
- What type of academic support is provided (tutors, etc.)?
- Will I be redshirted my first year?
- Will my scholarship cover a 5th year?
- What happens if I suffer a career-ending injury?
- Where am I on the recruiting list?



***Also, you must realize that recruiting is a business. Before entering a "four year contract" with a school, make sure you cover all of your bases.

Scholarships



☐ Less than 2% of college softball players receive full athletic scholarships. The good news is that players can earn money from different sources. Many student-athletes received a combination of athletic and academic money.

☐ Division 1 schools typically have rosters of 16-22 players. Each D1 coach is given 12 full scholarships to work with...you do the math. It is impossible for every player to have their college experience fully funded based solely on athletic ability.

☐ A scholarship is a one-year, renewable contract. Although most schools will honor it all four years, you must understand that it is not guaranteed. Keep in mind that neither the Ivy League Schools nor Division 3 schools can offer any athletic money. However, both CAN offer academic and other types of grants.

Grades



YOU MUST DO WELL IN SCHOOL! End of story. If you are not prepared to work in the classroom, then you can kiss college softball goodbye. To a collegiate coach, a lazy student translates into a lazy softball player. Your GPA and standardized test scores can either make or break you. Later in this presentation, you will read statements from some of the best players in the game and every single one mentions the importance of grades.

A college coach will not recruit an athlete whose standardized test scores are off the charts, but earns “C’s” in school. They view this as a sign of poor work ethic. If an athlete in high school can not juggle softball and school, then they will not survive in college. College coaches depend on their players to hold up their end of the bargain and do well in school. If you are ineligible, you miss an entire season and let down your teammates, coaches, and school.


Registering for ACT/SAT and NCAA Clearinghouse

Depending on the university, they will accept either the ACT or SAT (most colleges will accept both). All high schools in Illinois require their students to take the ACT in order to graduate, but in the past students have been exempted from the writing portion. As a graduate of an Illinois high school, you must take the entire ACT before you can sign a letter of intent with a university. Some schools (for example, schools on the west coast) require the SAT.

Register for the ACT at www.act.org/index.html and the SAT at www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/calenfees.html

After your standardized testing is complete, NCAA schools require that prospective student-athletes register with the NCAA Clearinghouse, (NCAA Eligibility Center) if they plan on participating in intercollegiate athletics at a Division 1 or 2 school. Official test scores must be sent from the testing agency using code 9999. Register at <https://web1.ncaa.org/eligibilitycenter/common>

Do's and Don'ts



THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE
FOR
HARD WORK



- DO be proactive in the recruiting process.
- DO keep your grades up. Hard work off the field translates to hard work on the field.
- DO practice extra every single day on your own.
- DO play more than one sport if you have the opportunity. Some of the top softball players played more than one sport throughout high school. It actually helps!
- DO join a well-established team. Coaches know the teams that are powerhouses every single year, and they flock to their games.
- DON'T assume college coaches will find you. They rarely find "a diamond in the rough."
- DON'T slack off in school. Grades are equally if not more important than athletic ability when it comes to recruiting.
- DON'T waste you or your parents' time and money if you are not serious about collegiate softball.
- DON'T automatically write off a school. If they ask you to take a visit, then take it. It can't hurt.
- DON'T feel that you are alone in this process. We are more than willing to help you!

What some of the best have to say!

Some of the top professional and collegiate softball players across North America have provided some helpful insight for the serious athlete interested in pursuing softball beyond high school. They share many of the same viewpoints regardless of the conference or division in which they compete(d).

We asked each player these three questions:

- 1) What was the most important thing that helped your career prior to high school?
- 2) What was the most important thing during high school?
- 3) What was the most important thing you did to help yourself during the recruiting process?



Jessica Mendoza

1) "Prior to high school it would be playing three different sports, not just softball. I was competitive in basketball, soccer, and softball. The other sports helped develop other parts of my game: speed, explosiveness, and most importantly, playing other sports prevented me from getting bored/burned out with just softball."

2) "During high school it was the extra work to get better every day, whether it was extra BP one day, working on backhands the next, or studying to get my grades UP so that I could play in college!"

3) "I didn't try to be or do anything other than what was capable of doing. I hustled and played my butt off every game I could, and always made sure I was MYSELF, someone who loves this game and just wants to get better."



**** Four-time 1st team All-American @ Stanford University**

**** Helped Team USA win the Gold medal at the 2004 Athens Olympics**

**** Named Softball Player of the Year in 2006**

**** Currently plays for the USSA Pride**

Danielle Lawrie



1) "The most important thing prior to high school I would say would be my dad installing a work ethic into my brother and myself. It allowed for us to understand that if you want to be successful you have to work while no ones watching. We bought into that and worked out ALL the time."

2) "Most important thing during highschool was not getting caught up in the wrong things. My dad had me on a tight schedule when it came to getting home from school and making sure I finished my homework and then I would either go and train with him or I would have basketball practice. There were many times I hated him for not letting me date really throughout high-school but it honestly paid off because I had my priorities straight right from the beginning."

3) "Most important thing during the recruiting process was obviously making sure I had the grades to get in where ever I wanted to go. Secondly, I didn't rush anything, I took my time on making my decision. I put myself out there in all the tournaments where all the big time schools were going to be and I let them all know I was coming. If you want to go somewhere you need to let them know."

**** Two-time 1st Team All-American**

**** Led the Washington Huskies to the 2009 National Championship**

**** 2009 Women's College World Series MVP**

**** Also competed for Team Canada in the 2008 Beijing Olympics**

Lauren Zembruski



**** In 2007, helped lead the Cougars to the Division II National Championship**

**** In 2008, received National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA) second team All-Region honors**

**** In 2009, first team All-Mideast Region by the NFCA at third base**

1) "The most important thing that helped my career prior to high school was playing multiple sports. It taught me a lot about myself being able to play with different people at different ages, playing for a variety of coaches, and traveling to numerous places. I was able to see the coaching styles I preferred, the types of areas I liked, and what kind of teammates I blended with the best. This helped me think of the places I would be happy to attend college at."

2) "The most important thing in high school was going to college camps that they held. This allowed me to see the coaches in action, see how they do things in their own way, and take a tour of the campus."

3) "The most important thing I did to help myself in the recruiting process was I went on all of my visits and did not commit after the first visit I liked. You become so excited about college and so eager for the process to be over with, that so many girls commit right away and end up not enjoying it there. Go on as many visits as possible and go where you feel like it can be your home away from home."



Cassie Walisiak

1) "The most important thing that helped my career prior to high school was just developing a solid academic and athletic foundation. It was at this time, in junior high, that I really became committed to the life of softball, by joining a top, competitive organization, taking hitting lessons from respected and knowledgeable instructors, working out and staying conditioned on my own, and really just deciding that softball was my passion and something I aspired to continue in college. It was at this time that I started to set goals and try to better myself for the future."

2) "The most important thing that helped my career during high school was a combination of extreme dedication and hard work. Because I wanted to attend an academically strong institution as well as play for a top, Division I softball program, I knew I had to spend equal (or actually more!) time "in the classroom", so to speak, as I did on the field. One's grades in high school dictate what kind of college one will be accepted to; athletic prowess can go a long way, but only so far. Yet, on the same token and more concretely, in order to get exposed to these top academic schools, I had to play in exposure tournaments where coaches from these schools were and could see me. This is where playing for a top, well-organized travel program really helped me. My travel team, the Orland Park Sparks, always placed us in the best exposure tournaments and made team booklets with each player's grades, ACT scores, activities, college status (committed or not), college interests, etc. Then, once I narrowed down my interests to the Ivy League, I began emailing coaches with my schedule and basic information, thereby showing interest and getting my name out there!"

3) "The most important thing I did to help myself in the recruiting process was honestly just deciding what I wanted and going after it. Always keeping my grades up as well as always giving my all on the field, combined with contacting and keeping in touch with coaches of universities I was interested in really proved to be successful for me, as well as for my peers in college. Decide what you want and work hard to go after it!! And, always be respectful to yourself, your teammates and coaches, your parents, and the game – those are big indicators of your value as a recruit, and you never know who's watching!"



**** Helped lead the Big Red to the Tucson, Arizona NCAA Regional in 2010**

**** Boasts a perfect fielding percentage in her first 2 years at Cornell**

**** Career batting average thus far is .253**

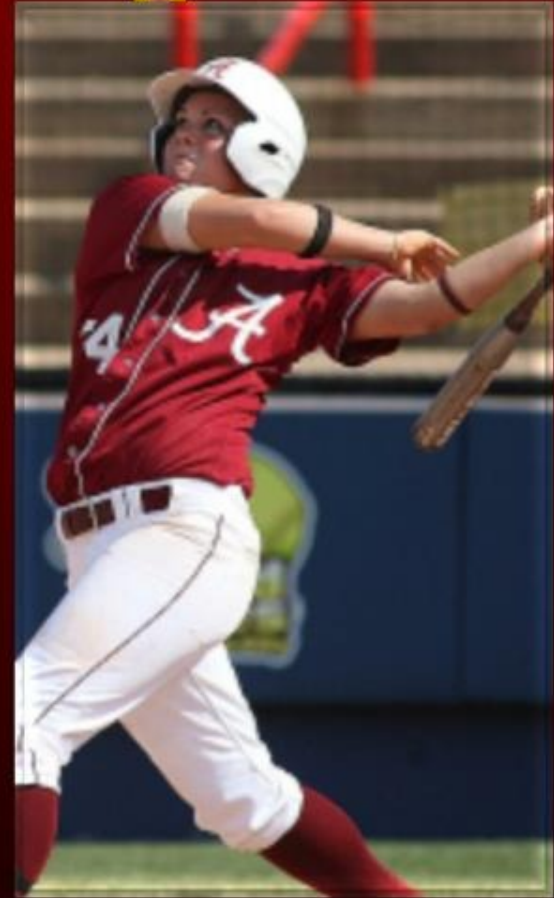


Charlotte Morgan

1) "Prior to high school was really having my parents support me with every part of softball and giving me and opportunity to do lessons an play on competitive travel ball teams."

2) "During high school was my dad making me make a commitment to hit and pitch for an hour everyday besides Monday. I was able to exceed and work hard and that truly got me to where I'm at."

3) "The recruitment process I would say just going to take unofficial trips and keeping my options open and seeing where I felt was best for me."



** Three-time All-American for the Tide

** Two-time SEC Player of the Year

** Recipient of the Lowe's Senior CLASS Award

Alisa Goler



1) "Without a doubt, the most important thing I did to help myself before high school was having my parents instill a strong work ethic into both my brother and I; both in the classroom and on the field. My dad made sure that when I practiced extra it was because I wanted to be the best, not because HE wanted me to be."

2) "I can think of two ways I helped myself out during high school: joining the Southern Force and keeping up with my grades. Joining a gold team allowed me to measure up to the best players in the country and it helped push me to excel. In the classroom, I took as much pride in receiving straight A's as I did on the field. I made sure that my grades and test scores were high enough that I could go to any type of academic institution I chose."

3) "The most important thing I did during the recruiting process was creating a general email with my contact information and schedule and sending it out to over 100 schools. I sent emails to local schools, as well as some on each coast. It didn't matter if I thought I'd end up there or not, I had to get my name out. Also, joining the Southern Force helped me greatly because it is an organization that is recognized across the country by Division One schools. I knew that the schools I dreamed of playing at would come watch our games each summer."

**** Three-Time All-American**

**** Helped the Bulldogs to their first ever Women's College World Series Appearance in 2009, & second appearance in 2010**

**** Top 10 Finalist for Player of the Year in 2009**

**** Named to 2009 WCWS All-Tournament Team**



Ivy Renfroe

1) "Playing competitive (ASA) travel softball (Southern Force & Tennessee Fury). As a pitcher, working really hard, practicing everyday, and taking pitching lessons from a very good coach who knows what they are talking about!"

2) "Again playing ASA travel softball and working hard almost everyday to get better! Go to as many camps as you can to get tips from coaches! Play high school ball to keep you in the game and playing live, instead of always practicing! Also, lifting weights can help you get better as a pitcher because we need leg strength!"

3) "Writing hand written letters to the coaches of the schools you want to play ball at; also, send Emails. Tell them where you are playing during the summer so they can come watch you! Go the camps of the schools you want to go to so the coaches can see you at their camp- make sure to tell them you are coming!"



**** Named to All-SEC Freshman Team and Second-Team All-SEC in her rookie campaign**

**** Lead Lady Vols to a Top-4 finish at the 2010 WCWS and 2012 WCWS Appearance as well.**

Megan Langenfeld



1) "The most important thing that helped my career prior to high school was deciding to play for teams in Southern California. Being from Bakersfield, the competition is not very high, so the best thing for me was to play where the highest competition was. In 7th grade, I started playing for a team in Corona, CA and in 10th grade I played for the Worth Firecrackers in Huntington Beach, CA."

2) "The most important thing for me in high school was to send out letter of interest to many colleges around the country and make sure to respond to every letter even if the college or university was not my number one choice. I sent out 40 letters in the beginning of my sophomore year in high school and replied to every letter/email that was returned. You never know what will happen in the future so you want to make sure you keep all your options open."

3) "The most important thing I did in the recruiting process was I kept myself organized. I have an organizer full of folders corresponding to each college/university. If I would get a letter I would file it in the correct folder and when I responded, I would put a copy of my response in the folder. I kept a copy of everything to make sure I wasn't repeating myself and also to make sure I didn't confuse one coach/school with another."

**** Three-Time All-American for the Bruins**

**** Led her team to the 2010 National Championship**

**** Named MVP of the 2010 Women's College World Series**

**** Top-3 Finalist for 2010 Player of the Year**