

AHA College and Career Center

Guide for prospective NCAA student athletes

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So, you want to be a college athlete. That's great! Now, you have to learn the process to actually be a college athlete. The National College Athletic Association (NCAA) has developed a process that ensures that all participating colleges and universities and their student-athletes are competing on a "level playing field," and that all prospective athletes are academically eligible to participate.

WHAT EVERY HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT RECRUITING

When a high school athlete daydreams about playing sports at college, does he see himself sitting humbly on the bench waiting for the coach to send him in? Probably not. Instead he sees himself acknowledging the cheers of the fans, granting an interview in the locker room after the game, and weighing the merits of an attractive offer to go professional. In short, he has the same fantasies that thousands of other young men and women have: that college will be the springboard to fortune and the big leagues.

Here are some things to consider:

- ♦ Only two out of every 100 college basketball players make it to the pros.
- ♦ The professionals for any major sport are usually drawn from big institutions, which are treasure troves of first-rate athletes playing on outstanding teams.
- ♦ The average pro football career lasts only three years.

These realities indicate that the college-bound athlete must think ahead to when the cheering stops. Careers in sports can end abruptly. Starting spots can evaporate after only one year. More often, college athletes have problems with eligibility. Practice schedules are hard on grades. Some players spend more than four years trying to graduate and eventually their eligibility expires.

If you are a high school athlete who wants to play college-level sports, keep two priorities in mind: ***COLLEGE FIRST, SPORTS SECOND***. Avoid situations that might leave you without a degree or even a team to play on.

STUDENT-ATHLETE'S HIGH SCHOOL PLAN

Freshman Year

- ❑ Talk to your counselor about NCAA core class requirements
- ❑ Keep your grades high and work on your study habits
- ❑ Get to know all the coaches in your sport
- ❑ Attend sports camps
- ❑ Realistically analyze your ability
- ❑ Start thinking about academic and career goals

Sophomore Year

- ❑ Keep up your grades
- ❑ Take the PLAN and/or PSAT test
- ❑ Talk to your coaches about your ability and ambitions
- ❑ Make preliminary inquiries to colleges that interest you (a brief letter to the college coach might be appropriate)

Junior Year

- ❑ Talk with your counselor about career goals and, again, about the NCAA core course requirements
- ❑ Talk with your coach about a realistic assessment of which college level you can play
- ❑ Take the PSAT, ACT, and SAT and use the Eligibility Center code of 9999 as a score recipient. Doing this sends your score directly to the Eligibility Center.
- ❑ Attend "Jumpstart to College Planning" workshop
- ❑ Refine your list of possible college choices. Know their admission requirements
- ❑ Create a sports resume
- ❑ Write letters to college coaches expressing your interest
- ❑ Obtain letters of recommendation from teachers
- ❑ Apply for eligibility to the NCAA Clearinghouse at the end of junior year
- ❑ Attend sports camps in the summer, if appropriate
- ❑ Request your official transcript be sent to the NCAA at the end of your junior year. You request this in Family Connection by selecting "NCAA" from the College List.

Senior Year

- ❑ Meet again with your counselor to ensure that you are meeting all graduation and NCAA requirements
- ❑ Attend college fairs and financial aid workshops
- ❑ Retake the ACT and/or SAT, if appropriate
- ❑ Refine your college list and apply for admission
- ❑ Be aware of recruiting rules regarding campus visits
- ❑ Complete Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) after January 1
- ❑ Sit down with your parents and coach to list the pros and cons of each school you are considering
- ❑ Be sure of your final choice before signing any papers
- ❑ Let coaches know when their school is no longer in the running. Thank them!
- ❑ Make your final college decision based on a meaningful education, excellent career preparation, and a satisfying athletic experience—IN THAT ORDER!

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR RECRUITER

- ♦ What is the recruiter's relationship to the school? Is he or she the head coach, assistant coach, an alumnus, or an admission representative? (Assurances carry different weight depending on who they come from.)
- ♦ Keep your education foremost in your mind by asking about academic programs that interest you. A good recruiter is as informed about programs as an admissions person is. Fire away with specific questions about majors and courses in your field.
- ♦ At what level does your sport compete? NCAA Division I schools offer athletic scholarships; most Division II schools offer scholarships; no Division III schools offer scholarships.
- ♦ Ask for details about athletic scholarships—any strings? Typically, athletic scholarships (or grants, as they are sometimes called) are for one year, renewable at the coach's discretion. If you get benched, do you start paying your own way from then on?
- ♦ How many athletes were kept on scholarship after their eligibility had expired? What is the college's graduation rate for athletes? Because of heavy demands on their time, some college athletes take five years to graduate. By their final year, they are usually ineligible to play.
- ♦ Is tutoring or counseling available? Beware of remarks like, "Don't worry. We haven't lost a player yet because of academics," which could imply that your education will be allowed to suffer before your value to the team will.
- ♦ What will happen if you are placed on academic probation? Do you lose part or all of your benefits?
- ♦ Ask the coach what he expects of his players: time commitment, behavior, appearance, etc., and decide whether you can work with her or him.
- ♦ What is expected of players during the off-season?
- ♦ Has drug use been an issue at your school or in your athletic program?
- ♦ Most importantly, ask yourself if the school would be right for you even if you weren't competing in athletics.

QUESTIONS TO ASK OF OTHER PLAYERS AT THE SCHOOL:

- ♦ What does your typical daily schedule look like? In-season? Off-season?
- ♦ How rigorous is your travel schedule?
- ♦ Approximately how many hours a night do you study?
- ♦ How do you like the living arrangements?
- ♦ What assistance is available if you have academic problems?
- ♦ Were changes made to any promises once you committed/enrolled? Is the program what you expected based on your recruiting experience?

QUESTIONS TO ASK SCHOOL OFFICIALS/ADMISSION OFFICERS:

- ♦ What are the different graduation rates for athletes? In your sport?
- ♦ How long does it take someone in your sport to earn a degree from this school?
- ♦ What is the placement rate and average starting salary for graduates in your field of study?
- ♦ What financial aid is available?

CHECKLIST FOR HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETES MAKING INITIAL CONTACTS WITH COLLEGE COACHES

STEP 1 Research the colleges that fit your academic and athletic needs. College reference books and search engines on the Internet can assist you. Establish a tentative list of colleges that you'd like to contact. Make sure you are academically eligible for admission to each school on the list. Also make sure that your grades, ACT/SAT scores, and class rank will allow you to be eligible athletically, as well. Your high school counselor or the worksheet in this booklet can help you if you are not sure.

STEP 2 Show your list to your coach and ask for feedback on how realistic your chances would be for each school. Ask if he/she would be willing to make/receive contacts on your behalf. If the answer is yes, provide your coach with the following information:

- ♦ A list of the colleges you plan to contact with each college's coach, phone number, e-mail address, and mailing address
- ♦ Copies of the documents you're sending to each college
- ♦ A copy of your current high school transcript and resume

Optional:

- ♦ A copy of your college/career goal statement
- ♦ Copies of your letters of recommendation from other adults

These documents will allow your high school coach to advocate for you knowledgeably. It is important to have his/her support.

STEP 3 Send an introduction letter—either from yourself or your coach—and your athletic resume to each college coach. (The samples that follow are designed to serve as guides. You will need to provide statistics that are appropriate to your sport.) Spring of junior year or fall of senior year can be good times to send these. You can also send a skills tape and game tape with this initial information, or you can offer to send them "upon request."

STEP 4 Make sure to take the ACT and/or SAT in the spring of your junior year. Most college coaches will insist on knowing your scores before considering you.

STEP 5 If you are pursuing NCAA Division I or II programs, file a completed NCAA Clearinghouse release form at the end of your junior year or beginning of senior year. You can find

register for the Clearinghouse at www.eligibilitycenter.org Click on "Going to School Fall 2010 or later". Then select "New Account" tab at the top of the screen. Begin the registration process. If you are looking at NAIA schools, their eligibility center is www.PlayNAIA.org

STEP 6 Colleges will often respond by asking you or your coach to complete an athletic questionnaire. If you receive a questionnaire from a random school, take the time to fill it out! You never know when an unexpected opportunity might come your way.

STEP 7 Keep in mind that summer sports camps and tournaments provide excellent opportunities for networking with college coaches. Just be sure that you are familiar with the rules that regulate such contact. Your coaches or counselors can provide information booklets from the various athletic associations to assist you. Not knowing the rules will not be an excuse for a recruiting violation.

SAMPLE LETTER FROM HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETE TO COLLEGE COACH

Date

Coach's Name
College/University
Address
City, State, Zip

Dear Coach So & So:

I would like to introduce myself. I am currently a senior at the Academy of Holy Angels. I have played high school volleyball for four years, starting as a setter for the last three. I am 5'8" and weigh 145 pounds. I have been All-Conference for the past two years and All-State this year. I was also selected for the North All Star Team this year.

My coach's name is Mary Jones. Her contact information is included on the attached information page. She has indicated to me that she would welcome your calls. E-mail is a reliable way to reach her as well.

I rank 78 in my class of 799 students. My cumulative GPA is a 3.7 on a 4.0 scale. My ACT composite was a 24. I intend to retake it in October. I am interested in pursuing a four-year degree in biology. I also hope to continue playing volleyball on the college level. Your program especially interests me. I have followed your team's season in the *Star Tribune* and have attended two games.

I have included a skills tape and a game tape. My jersey number is #1 in the light-colored uniforms. Also included is a schedule of our 2004-05 volleyball season. Please let me know if there is additional information that my coach or I can provide.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Athlete's Name

SAMPLE STUDENT-ATHLETE RESUME

AMY ATHLETE Volleyball Information

1225 Any Street Any Town, Any State 81234
Telephone: (500) 111-1111 or (500) 222-2222
Aathlete@aol.com

Coach: Mary Jones
1010 Training Avenue
Any Town, Any State 81234
Telephone: (500) 111-1212
E-mail: mjones@park1.k12.co.us

High School: Academy of Holy Angels
6600 Nicollet Ave S
Richfield, Mn 55423
612-798-2600

Volleyball Division: Class 4A
Position: Setter

Jersey: #1 Dark/#10 Light

Offense Used: 5-1 Offense

Years Starting Varsity: 3 years

Awards/Honors: Best Setter (2002, 2003, 2004)
Most Valuable Player (2003)
All Conference (2002, 2003)
All State (2004)
North All Star Team (2004)

Experience: AAU Volleyball (2003, 2004)
Coed Power Outdoor & Indoor Tournaments (2003-04)
Aspen Volleyball Camp (2002, 2003)
Any University Summer Camp (2002)

Height: 5'8"
Weight: 145 lbs.
Vertical: 23"
GPA & Rank: 3.74 on 4.0 scale
78 of 799 (top 10%)

Graduation Date: May 2005

RECENT CHANGES TO NCAA ACADEMIC ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Students who wish to participate in collegiate athletics at the Division I or II level must apply for certification with the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Clearinghouse after their junior year in high school. Academy of Holy Angels counselors can assist students in completing the paperwork necessary in this process.

To be certified by the Clearinghouse, you must:

- ♦ **Graduate from high school.**
You should apply for certification after your junior year in high school if you are sure you wish to participate in intercollegiate athletics as a freshman at a Division I or II institution. The Clearinghouse will issue a preliminary certification report after you have had all your materials submitted. After you graduate, if your eligibility status is requested by a member institution, the Clearinghouse will review your final transcript to make a final certification decision according to NCAA standards.
- ♦ **Complete the 16 core courses listed below.**

Core Units Required for NCAA Certification

	Division I	Division II
English Core	4 years	3 years
Mathematics Core (Algebra I or higher)	3 years	2 years
Science Core (including at least 1 year of lab science)	2 years	2 years
Social Science Core	2 years	2 years
Additional English, math, or science	1 year	2 years
Additional Core (from any area above or foreign language, nondoctrinal religion/philosophy, computer science*)	4 years	3 years
TOTAL CORE UNITS REQUIRED	16	14

- ♦ **Present a minimum required grade point average in your core courses.** Only courses that are on Academy of Holy Angels's "List of NCAA Approved Core Courses" can be used to calculate your NCAA g.p.a. No special values are allowed for "+" or "-" grades.
- ♦ **Achieve a combined SAT or ACT sum score that matches your core-course grade point average in the index listed on the following page.**

New Core GPA/Test Score Index (to be used with 16 core courses)

Core GPA	SAT	ACT
3.550 & above	400	37
3.525	410	38
3.500	420	39
3.475	430	40
3.450	440	41
3.425	450	41
3.400	460	42
3.375	470	42
3.350	480	43
3.325	490	44
3.300	500	44
3.275	510	45
3.250	520	46
3.225	530	46
3.200	540	47
3.175	550	47
3.150	560	48
3.125	570	49
3.100	580	49
3.075	590	50
3.050	600	50
3.025	610	51
3.000	620	52
2.975	630	52
2.950	640	53
2.925	650	53
2.900	660	54
2.875	670	55
2.850	680	56
2.825	690	56
2.800	700	57
2.775	710	58
2.750	720	59
2.725	730	59
2.700	730	60
2.675	740-750	61
2.650	760	62
2.625	770	63
2.600	780	64
2.575	790	65
2.550	800	66
2.525	810	67
2.500	820	68
2.475	830	69
2.450	840-850	70
2.425	860	70
2.400	860	71
2.375	870	72
2.350	880	73
2.325	890	74
2.300	900	75
2.275	910	76
2.250	920	77
2.225	930	78
2.200	940	79
2.175	950	80
2.150	960	80
2.125	960	81
2.100	970	82
2.075	980	83
2.050	990	84
2.025	1000	85
2.000	1010	86

PARTIAL QUALIFIER STATUS

A "partial qualifier" is eligible to practice with a team at its home facility and receive an athletics scholarship during his or her first year at a Division II school, and then has four seasons of competition remaining.

In order to be classified a "partial qualifier," you have not met the requirements for a qualifier, but you are required to graduate from high school and meet one of the following requirements:

- ♦ Combined SAT score of 820 or ACT sum score of 68.
- ♦ Successful completion of a required core curriculum consisting of 14 core courses and a 2.000 GPA in the core curriculum.

THE NCAA AND THE ACT/SAT EXAMS

It is important to note that you **MUST** send your ACT or SAT score straight from the testing agency. If you do not list the NCAA as one of your recipients while registering for the exam, simply go to their website and send it after the test is taken. ACT - www.actstudent.org, SAT-www.collegeboard.com. Code "9999" to have the scores sent directly to the Eligibility Center.

WALK-ON ATHLETES

A high school athlete who has not received a scholarship but wants to play a sport in college may be given the opportunity to "walk on" at one or more schools. "Walking on" means that he or she becomes an unscholarshipped member of the team, is allowed to try to earn a position on the team, and is given the opportunity to earn a scholarship at some time in the future. Walking on can be an excellent opportunity for a good athlete who is serious about his or her sport, but it requires careful planning with your counselor and your coach. If you are interested in walking on, follow this advice:

With your counselor:

- ♦ Be sure you satisfy the eligibility requirements of the NCAA. Walk-on athletes are subject to the same rules and regulations as scholarshipped athletes.
- ♦ Do all the preliminary planning needed to identify a possible career. You may not settle on one, but look into it anyway. The experience is helpful.
- ♦ Find the colleges that provide programs in your area of interest. Develop a list of them. If you are undecided, identify schools that provide a broad range of programs.
- ♦ Discuss the list with your counselor and parents.
- ♦ Select your top three or four schools from the list.

With your high school coach:

- ♦ Discuss your ability to participate on the college level. Be open-minded during this meeting. Remember that your coach has only your best interests in mind.
- ♦ Identify any additional schools at which you may have the chance to play. Be sure they, too, satisfy your career and educational goals.
- ♦ Contact the school(s) to secure the college coach's permission to "walk on."
- ♦ Mail applications, being sure to follow the admission procedures specified by the college coach.

HOW TO CONTACT THE NCAA CLEARINGHOUSE

NCAA Eligibility Center
P.O. Box 7136
Indianapolis, IN 46207
FAX: 317/968-5100
www.eligibilitycenter.org

Clearinghouse Customer Service: Representatives will be available from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., CST, Monday through Friday by calling (877) 262-1492.