



Student Athlete College Recruiting Guide

A real world guide to understanding how to assist your Student Athlete in the college recruiting process.

Contributing article by www.sacrg.com

College Recruiting & You

Every year U.S. colleges award more than \$1 Billion to nearly 150,000 student athletes. Over 1/3 of all NCAA athletes are on athletic scholarships.

Every year talented student athletes who desire to play collegiate sports do not get the opportunity to get noticed and miss an experience of a life time.

Every year there are quality college sport programs struggling to fill team positions.

Every year there are parents of student athletes who do not know what to do to help their child get recruited.

There's a lot of information on athletic scholarships out there. The problem is that most people just get overwhelmed with the rules and the ideas, and can't figure out a plan of action. Which means they stay frozen in their tracks and usually end up doing nothing effective.

If you're like most parents or college bound athletes, you have only vague ideas about how you'd go about getting a sports scholarship or just an opportunity to participate in college sport programs. You know you're good enough, and your coaches assure you that you can play at the college level, but where do you start?

You ask your coach, but besides contacting a limited number of college coaches he or she knows, they are not responsible to organize a scholarship search for you. You talk to your guidance counselor, but they really only know about academic scholarships. You talk to your friends and teammates, but they're clueless.

You can't afford to pay a recruiting service or consultant \$1,000 or more, but you need help.

Each year thousands of student athletes and parents market themselves to college coaches. Some are very successful, some are not. It's not a difficult process if you have a road map and the basic resources to give your student athlete the best possible advantage. Regardless of the type of college sport, the process is the same - you have to get noticed to get recruited!

This is where the Student Athlete College Recruiting Guide can provide a clear Road Map, a Step-by-Step Process giving you detailed instructions, examples, templates and the confidence you need to start & finish the Recruiting Journey.

The key to success is to remember that this process is not a sprint, it's a multi-year marathon and the journey starts with a common sense plan. Working the plan, as a Parent / Student team, spending a little time each month can open doors you never thought possible that lead you to a collegiate sports experience of a life time.

Let's play ball!

Can my Student Athlete compete at the college level?

Let's be realistic. College sport positions and athletic scholarships aren't available to everyone. You should be aware that most student athletes will not be able to play Division 1 sports. There are too many athletes and only so many Division 1 schools. However, the vast majority of colleges or universities are not Division 1 schools and yet they have very competitive sports programs.

You or your student athlete will have to meet some important conditions to get to the next level. There is a significant level of student athlete competitors seeking to fill college sports positions and potential scholarship offers. You may be a "star" athlete at your high school, but you will need to know if you match up with other high school star athletes around the country.

You'll need to identify your academic and athletic abilities and what division level student athlete you are to target the right schools where you have the best chance of competing for an opportunity, receiving a scholarship or incentive package. Ask all of your coaches and others you know that will be honest and candid with you. Ask them what they think of your athletic abilities and at what division level they believe you could compete in.

You may find that the truth hurts, or perhaps you'll be surprised to find that you have underestimated your abilities. This is a critical 1st step in the process. You may waste your time if you focus your efforts on colleges with the wrong athletic division and academic requirements. You want to make sure you are targeting the right academic schools in the right athletic talent division.

To compete at the college level, coaches are looking for a student athlete who posses the applicable sport specific tools such as strength, speed, hitting, hitting for power, fielding etc. After that they look at character and mental toughness that make-up the will-to-win, attitude following failure, performance under pressure, respect for family and teammates.

Common Myths, Misunderstandings & Misconceptions

Many student athletes and their parents fall into common recruiting myths & misunderstandings and they miss recruiting opportunities or even fail to execute an effective plan all together. Don let the following misconceptions prevent you from finishing the race and taking next step in the journey:

1. If I'm good enough, the coaches will find me.

A very small number of recruited athletes are "discovered" by college coaches. The majority of student athletes have to take the initiative to contact coaches.

2. My high school coach will take care of my college athletic recruiting responsibilities to get me recruited with an athletic scholarship.

High School coaches are a great resource for college coaches. Few high school coaches have either the time or knowledge to take charge of your recruiting. It's your responsibility to market your talents and get your name in front of college coaches. The average high school coach has personal relationships with less than 3% of the collegiate opportunities across the country. You have to take charge of your own athletic career!

3. I'd have to be the best athlete on my team to get a scholarship.

Even if you're not a national superstar who is already being recruited, an accomplished, talented athlete has a great chance of being recruited, if you let the coaches know about yourself in the right way.

4. My team has to have the best winning season ever to get noticed.

So your Team didn't win the State championship this year, that also means that except for one, all other teams in the state did not win as well. College coaches rarely look at the entire team season in evaluating a player. A talented athlete has a great chance of being recruited if you let the coaches know about yourself in the right way.

5. College coaches do not like being contacted by student athletes or parents.

On the contrary, coaches hope to hear from good athletes who are interested in their program. Some blue-chip athletes come to their attention naturally, but there aren't enough of them for a coach to fill his or her roster. In many cases there are many more opportunities available than there are available student athletes. Coaches do not have the time, budget and energy to tour the country to find qualified student athletes. They expect you to come to them.

6. If college coaches are not visiting my school to watch me play, then I'm probably not good enough to play at the college level.

The college coaches for your sport are busy coaching the same time you are playing. While some sport programs use scouts, the majority do not have the budget or the staff to visit every school for every recruit. They depend on you sending them your profile & film.

7. I can wait until my senior year to look for an athletic scholarship.

The recruiting process will take time, you will need to start as early as possible. The best plan is to begin contacting coaches when you have JV or Varsity stats and film to show, usually by your junior year. You'll want to get on the coaches radar as early as possible.

8. A Division I scholarship is the only opportunity for the high school student athlete.

Less than 1 % of high school student athletes receive a fully funded Division I scholarship. There are hundreds of outstanding Division II & III colleges around the country that provide scholarships, grant money, discounts and an outstanding education!

9. If I'm not good enough to play at the Division I level, then I'll play at the Division II level. While that may work out for you, there are hundreds of outstanding Division III colleges around the country that provide extremely competitive programs, grant money, discounts and an outstanding education!

10. The only colleges to consider are the Division I big name schools.

Don't get fooled by the name game. This is about getting a quality education while being able to extend your student athlete career and have fun. Unless you are a top 1% athlete, it's not about going professional. It's about getting noticed, getting recruited and getting educated at the right college for you.

11. Once a student athlete is a senior, it's probably too late to be recruited.

Other than the Division I schools, the major of athletic recruiting takes place during your senior year. Eighty percent of the college programs make their final recruiting decisions after January 1st of the student athlete's senior year. However, the earlier you start the better!

12. Utilizing a recruiting service is the best way to get a scholarship or financial aid package.

College coaches rarely use recruiting services. However, many college coaches do use collegiate scouting organizations. I would only recommend an organization that has established coach relationships, works with qualified student athletes and offers some type of guarantee.

13. The best way to get discovered is to go to college camps because this is where a student athlete can get discovered.

College coaches and/or scouts primarily focus on student athletes already on their lists. Every college will market their camp to you. Camps are expensive, time consuming and do not always have the same college coaches participating. Many have local high school and student coaches teaching the camp. You have only few opportunities to use camps to your advantage based on your student athlete marketing plan. So be cautious, think it through, seek advice from your high school coach and spend your time and money wisely.

These common recruiting misunderstandings can cause you to miss real recruiting opportunities that could be the difference in thousands of dollars in college tuition cost or even the chance to play for at he team of your dreams! Focus on finishing the race and taking next step in the journey.

What do College Coaches expect?

A very small percentage of high school student athletes receive college opportunities, scholarships or incentive packages because the coach “happened to find him or her.” Only the top elite athletes, the top 100 nationally receive enough media coverage and recognition that they are automatically recruited without having to make an effort. The other 99% have to take the initiative to contact the colleges and coaches where they have an interest. Most schools recruiting budgets are small, and coaches rely on you to contact them first. College coaches are very busy, they don’t have the time or budget to travel around the country to see you or your student athlete compete.

Cover letters, profile-resumes, stats, video and references become key tools for the coach in the recruiting and evaluating process. You might think that it’s too self-promoting to make the initial contact with a coach and to “market” your student athlete. However, this is the norm. If you don’t do it, other student athletes will get the opportunity, get noticed and get recruited because they and their parents will have made the effort and received the attention. These days, college coaches expect you to do this, it’s an expected practice!

Through my own college recruiting journey, I’ve had the opportunity to meet, speak with and, in some cases, develop a personal relationship with coaches. I have found a consistent set of expectations that coaches have of potential student athlete recruits:

Coaches expect you to be Proactive! Think about the number of student athletes that participate in sports in any large populated state such as New York or California. In popular sports such as football, baseball or soccer, there are tens of thousands of youth athletes. With so many athletes out there, it is impractical to think that a coach can learn about everyone and recruit all qualified athletes. Getting noticed is a huge challenge. So how is it possible to get noticed? The most effective means of recruiting is to recruit yourself by being proactive!

Coaches expect you to prepare academically! College Coaches expect that you understand that preparation academically is of primary importance to the recruiting process. This means preparing in the classroom as much as on the field. Failure to take care of your academic standing often means failure to achieve athletic goals. As an example, since Division III institutions do not offer athletic scholarships, academic performance is just as valued as athletic performance in the recruiting process.

Understand this: Regardless of how talented your athletic abilities are, Your Grades will make the biggest difference in admissions and financial aid outcomes! Every college has academic Scholarships or Grant money that is awarded students and student athletes who demonstrate academic achievement. High academic achievement means you will be accepted into more colleges, have greater college choices, your tuition costs will be much less each year and allows you to get noticed and stand out from the pack.

College Coaches expect you to make the first contact with them. In most cases, if you're not interested in their institution they will not force themselves upon you. Here are a few common sense rules of engagement college coaches would expect of you:

1. Be an effective communicator. The student athlete (not the parents) should write or e-mail the coach when appropriate. The student athlete should always call the coach back when they call you.
2. Little things count, be sure to review your letters and/or e-mail messages and spell their name and their schools name correctly.
3. Be honest. If you are interested in their program great, tell them. If not, say so, don't waste their time or yours.
4. Provide your student athlete contact information, make sure to note when you are available. Share your cell phone number and e-mail address.
5. Complete applications, follow-up and send grades and teacher recommendations to the schools you have an interest. Get all the paperwork taken care of as early as possible.
6. Prepare your questions for them so when they call or when you visit you're prepared, and have something to talk about. This shows that you are interested.
7. Do your homework. Know about the athletic program, the coach's name, the division they're in, their current record, any program history etc.

Keep in mind most coaches are working with limited budgets, very little time, staff and resources. You have to be persistent, prepared and polite to get noticed at any division. If nothing else, every coach wants players who can enhance their program. Character is a key component of integrity. Show your character!

What can you expect from your High School Coach?

High school coaches are a great resource for college coaches. They will provide their top athlete list to all of their college coach contacts. They're a valuable and powerful reference that college coaches will want to talk to about your student athlete.

They are an excellent source for a positive student athlete recommendation letter. Work hard to keep your relationship with the coach a positive one. Do not get caught up in the parent - coach "my athlete doesn't get enough playing time" discussion - argument. If your student athlete is good enough, they'll get enough playing time.

Consider developing your relationship with the high school coach by volunteering in some capacity to assist the coaching staff and the team as a whole, perhaps through the team booster club. I would suggest that if you can operate a simple digital video camera, offer to film each game or athletic event, providing a copy of the event for the coach and/or his coaching staff. Of course you would retain the master copy for your own video to supply college coaches when required.

Understand that few high school coaches have either the time or knowledge to take charge of your recruiting plan. The coach's job is to coach the team. The average high school coach has personal relationships with less than 5% of the collegiate opportunities across the country. Consider yourself very lucky and be grateful if the coach has the time, ability and interest in providing any real college assistance let alone recruiting opportunities.

It's your responsibility to market your talents, get your name in front of college coaches and control your own college career!

What can you expect as a Parent?

Let's talk about your involvement as a parent in the recruiting process... You must commit time to this!

Parents: the recruiting reality is that your involvement is as important as your student athlete's ability to play at the college level. You must commit your time to this process!

Your son or daughter has his or her hands full with academics and athletics. It's important that they do their best in these two areas because their ability to get potential scholarship offers, grant awards and/or incentive packages depends on it!

You need to take the lead in mapping out the plan, contacting schools, writing letters, writing E-mails, replying to coaches' inquiries, completing questionnaires and tracking communications. It's a big job and will get more complex as more coaches respond. This process is very similar to researching and preparing for the big career job interview. It takes time, patience and a clear focus on the goal to win the race.

This can be very overwhelming for your student athlete, so they will need your help, guidance, organization, patience and common sense decision making. When coaches start to write and call your student athlete, your son or daughter can get caught up in all of the attention. Keep them on task. Don't let them get side tracked from their primary responsibilities - academics & athletics!

So what to do? You have three options:

1. Do nothing, cross your fingers and hope for an opportunity and a scholarship
2. Let an expensive recruiting service determine your student athlete's opportunities
3. Do it yourself marketing

The choice should be obvious. You can do it, We can help...

Let's get started!

Step #1: Select the right schools to contact

Choosing the right college takes careful thought, consideration and common sense. It's best to know what kind of student your child is and what type of learning environment they are best suited for. It would be a shame to go through the lengthy college search and financing process only to find out in the first semester that your college choice has too few students in a small town with no activities of interest as their grades suffer and they long to be anywhere but at that college.

The Internet is the best research resource you have.

Start with the "College Planning Guide - Beginning the Search"

Also reference the "College Planning Guide - College Resource Links"

When you have a pretty realistic assessment of your academic & athletic abilities, I recommend finding a couple schools above your level, a couple of schools below so you have something to fall back on, and the rest right in the ballpark.

How many schools should we consider?

From a recruiting standpoint, I recommend at least 20-25, but preferably 40-50. This is where your insight comes in. Your son or daughter's world of reference is probably small, so they'll only think of a few schools. However, you will have some ideas of where you want them to check besides. Write to those schools in addition to the ones he or she selects. You never know what will happen, and you want to have a number of options open months down the road when it is time to make the decision. It's a numbers game, the more schools you market to the greater the chances and opportunities of receiving a scholarship or larger financial aid package. Be careful not to dismiss colleges too quickly, consider marketing to colleges outside of your initial distance radius. You never know what opportunities you may miss.

Gather college & college coach's contact information while researching

While you research potential colleges, use this time to also gather information for your marketing letters. You'll need the names of the coach and/or the recruiting coordinator's, E-mail and mailing addresses of the schools on your list. I recommend that you go to each school's website to find out about their academic and athletic programs. This is not only a good way to find out the name and address of the coaches, but an excellent way to research the school and your sport at that school as well as costs and other decision factors.

There are several excellent, free sites to start with:

National Collegiate Athletic Association <http://www.ncaa.org> Go to the Sports & Champion section, find your sport, review each division, copy/paste the information into a spreadsheet to sort by state, division etc. You can use Google or yahoo to find each college's web site. You can copy/paste each college's web site information (both academic and athletics sites in your spreadsheet). This worksheet will become an invaluable tool as part of your overall research and future communications log. More on that later. Be sure to find the coach's name, E-mail, mailing address and phone number if possible. It may take a little time and energy to locate it.

Another free college search tool is the College Board web site <http://apps.collegeboard.com/search/index.jsp>. They have an excellent collection of tools especially for college searching using a detailed criteria. It too is not perfect because the directory also does not contain the actual coach's contact info.

Next steps in the College Recruiting process to be considered and planned for:

- Step #2: Write the right Student Athlete Cover Letter
- Step #3: Write the right Student Athlete Profile - Resume
- Step #4: Coach's Letter of Recommendation
- Step #5: Plan & Prepare to Use Video Effectively
- Step #6: Consider how you will use Technology
- Step #7: Sending your Student Athlete Marketing Package
- Step #8: Understanding the Student Athlete Questionnaire
- Step #9: Tracking Your Communications
- Step #10: NCAA Rules, Regulations & Resources
- Step #11: Prepare to speak with College Coaches
- Step #12: Questions to Ask the Coach
- Step #13: Sending out Updates to College Coaches
- Step #14: Choose the right Sports Camps
- Step #15: How do I know if my student athlete is being Recruited?
- Step #16: Follow-up Updates to College Visits
- Step #17: The College Decision Matrix

Where can you get additional assistance with this process? www.sacrg.com can help!

How do I know if my student athlete is being recruited?

Getting attention from college coaches is the dream of any young student athlete who has a genuine desire to participate in college athletics. Yet, many prospects and parents often think they are being recruited by colleges when they're really not. How can you determine if you are actually being recruited? Here are some helpful ways to assess your status with college coaches:

You Are Not Being Recruited If...

a. If you have received information about a college from that institution's admissions office, you are not being recruited to play athletics. You are being enticed through a highly effective direct marketing program to consider attending that college your freshman year. Colleges purchase mailing lists of prospective students who may fit their specific entrance requirements from several sources, but most likely they got your name and address from the companies that administered the standardized test you took during your sophomore, junior or senior year in high school.

b. If you have received a letter from a college coach asking for information about you in the form of an introductory letter and questionnaire, you are not being recruited. The good news, however, is that you are in the first stage of the evaluation process. Getting on the radar screen is the initial and most crucial stage of the process. The number of questionnaires you have tells you how many coaches know about you. Period.

c. If a college coach sees you at a tournament, a travel or club team event or meet, you are not being recruited. While it is rare for college coaches to discover talent at these events (they usually enter the gates with a list of players they have already evaluated on paper and on tape), keep your fingers crossed that they see you make a great play, hit a double off the wall, come from behind in a race or shoot the round of your life.

d. If you receive a letter from a coach saying that he or she will keep up with you during your senior year, you are not being recruited. Coaches have a long list of prospects and they will keep all their options open until they decide on the top few athletes they will decide to invite to their campus for official visits.

e. If a college coach calls your high school or travel team coach to ask for information, you are not being recruited. Again, the good news is that if a coach has gotten to the stage of calling others about your abilities, you are at the very least on their list of players to seriously consider.

You Know You're In Recruiting Trouble When...

a. You have only a few questionnaires (or none at all) from college coaches and they are not the ones you have in mind. There are nearly 1,000 colleges carrying most sports across the nation. How many know about you?

b. You believe it when somebody tells you that if you are good enough college coaches will find you. That old saying no longer applies in most cases. With competition fierce for scholarships and roster spots, if your profile and videotape are not made available to a wide range of coaches, there is a good chance you will not be evaluated.

c. You do not have good statistics and videotape to give college coaches upon their request. Most coaches make their first evaluation of prospects based on the substantiated numbers they have posted. If you pass muster there, coaches will want to evaluate you on videotape before spending money to come and watch you in person.

d. You have narrowed your choice of colleges down to less than five colleges you will consider attending. The chances that you fit those specific coaches needs (athletically, position, size, speed, strength, statistics and grades) are not in your favor.

e. You think walking on is a great option. If you are a true competitor, you will want to play in college, not just practice and sit on the sidelines while scholarship athletes are the only ones receiving significant playing time. Colleges love for you to walk on because you will be paying, in most cases, the entire fee to attend that school. However, walk-ons rarely see much playing time and typically miss out on things like making travel squads and living in the dorms with your teammates. If you must take this route, do your best to secure the status of "invited walk-on."

How will you know when you Are being Recruited?

Feeling Overwhelmed? Don't be... Win the Race!

Each year thousands of student athletes and parents market themselves to college coaches. Some are very successful, some are not. It's not a difficult process if you have a road map and the basic resources to give your student athlete the best possible advantage. Regardless of the type of college sport, the process is the same - you have to get noticed to get recruited!

I've presented many facets of the recruiting process, but it would be impossible to cover all the variables in an article like this. I hope I've removed the mystery and I have been able to give you some of the tools necessary to prepare and guide you through the process. If you follow the roadmap I've given you, I trust you will do just fine.

The key to success is to remember that this process is not a sprint, it's a multi-year marathon and the journey starts with a common sense plan. Working the plan, as a Parent / Student team, spending a little time each month can open doors you never thought possible that will lead you to a collegiate sports experience of a life time. It's at that point I hope you would consider the race having been won.

Thank you for allowing me to assist you in this process. I hope this has helped you as much as it has helped me & my student athlete.

Need more assistance with the process? www.sacrg.com can help!

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