

What Students Need to Know About College Athletic Recruiting

Communicating with Coaches

Because recruitment for many Division I athletic programs is happening earlier and earlier each year, it is important for athletes and their families to understand each sport's timeline. In some cases, recruitment occurs two or three years before an athlete is due to enter college. Students should continue to have conversations with their coaches and the college counseling office as to how to interpret some of the communication they are receiving. The most important thing is to respond to inquiries and keep options open.

First Steps

It is important for student-athletes to be proactive in the recruiting process. Fill out online questionnaires, which will enter a student into the college's recruiting database and may trigger an email from the coach to gather more information. As previously noted, those who have achieved a high level of play early in high school may start getting letters of interest from various coaches as early as freshman and sophomore years. If students are interested in a program, they should respond to these letters and remain on the program's mailing list.

Every student needs to find a college or university that offers an environment where he or she would be fully satisfied even if athletics were not a part of the mix. Elite athletes are sometimes pressured into making a verbal commitment to a college program. However, it is always the student's choice to wait and view additional colleges and universities later in their high school career.

Steps to Take During Campus Visits (Official and Unofficial)

Schedule a meeting with the coach. Provide him or her with a transcript and test results; if possible, send these materials prior to the visit.

- If possible, watch a practice to observe the coaching style and team chemistry.
- Research the team's roster to better understand the team's recruiting needs (for example, if a student is a goaltender and there are already five on the team, it may be harder to get recruited).
- Research the time commitment of playing on a particular team and understand how it will impact academic and extracurricular collegiate plans.
- Official visits are generally offered by Division I and II schools and are paid for by the college. There is a limit of five visits for DI and DII combined. There is no visit limit for DIII or NAIA schools. Regardless of division, these visits may only take place after an athlete has officially begun his or her senior year of high school.
- Division III colleges are allowed to offer official visits, but generally they do not pay for them. Unofficial visits are those made by prospective student-athletes and paid for by their families. These visits are unlimited and can occur anytime.

- **Students who hope to practice, play, or receive an athletic scholarship at the Division I or II level must register with the NCAA. A student can do this at any point during his or her high school career, but this must occur by the end of junior year.** The NCAA Eligibility Center requires students to submit transcripts and test scores so that they can determine eligibility for collegiate play at the Division I and II levels. Information on how to register is available at www.eligibilitycenter.org. ACT or SAT scores should be sent directly from the testing agency.

What is a Verbal Commitment?

The NCAA website states the following: "This phrase is used to describe a college-bound student-athlete's commitment to a school before he or she signs (or is able to sign) a National Letter of Intent. A college-bound student-athlete can announce a verbal commitment at any time. While verbal commitments have become very popular for both college-bound student-athletes and coaches, this "commitment" is NOT binding on either the college-bound student-athlete or the college or university. Only the signing of the National Letter of Intent accompanied by a financial aid agreement is binding on both parties."

Standardized Testing

All students take the PSAT as sophomores and juniors. For very early recruiting, the PSAT can serve as a placeholder until the student has taken the SAT or ACT. **While the majority of students will take the SAT or ACT in the winter of junior year, we recommend that prospective student-athletes complete some standardized testing in the fall of junior year, as most coaches will want to see scores as soon as possible.** The downside of taking the test this early is that a student may still have math and vocabulary to cover in class that will help boost his or her score. Of course, students can continue to take the SAT or ACT throughout their junior year and into the fall of senior year.

Academics

It is key that students maintain their grades and academic rigor throughout high school. While a coach can recruit and offer support for an application, ultimately, it is up to the admissions office to make the final decision on a student's candidacy. Doing well both in school and on the playing field can make the recruitment process go much more smoothly.

Athletic Recruiting Calendar

Class 9

- Do as well as you can do in each course
- Get involved in the Dexter Southfield community
- Plan courses well for class 10

Class 10

- Continue to do well in classes
- Seek out other extracurricular activities besides athletics
- Make plans for summer camps, showcases, and tournaments

Class 11

- Continue to improve grades
- Seek leadership positions where available
- Meet with your coach to help with questions about recruitment and how he/she can assist you
- Meet with your college counselor and continue to do so often
- Be proactive - fill out questionnaires, write emails to coaches, and send videos
- Get a copy of your transcript and test scores to send to coaches
- Visit schools!
- Make your college list

Class 12

- Decide whether to apply early decision and where
- Keep grades up
- Begin the financial aid process by filling out the FAFSA and CSS Profile by October
- Send official scores to NCAA
- Plan official/unofficial visits
- Continue conversations with your college counselor

Questions to Ask

Some of the following questions may be important to your individual situation. If so, don't hesitate to ask a coach or an admission officer on campus. You don't have to think about all (or any) of these, but we want you to be aware of a few questions worth asking.

Academics

- Does the school have the academic curriculum I want?
- Is there academic student support for athletes?
- Can I study abroad if I am an athlete?
- Are there required study halls for athletes?
- Do athletes get registration priority for courses?
- How high is the graduation rate for athletes?

Athletics

- Do I have to try out for the team?
- What is the expected time commitment?
- How many players try out? How many travel?
- Do walk-ons get opportunities to play?
- What years are the athletes who play my position?
- Do students get "red-shirted" in their first year?

Questions for Current Students on the Team

- What happens during a typical practice?
- How many hours per night do you study?
- Does the coaching staff respect your academic duties?
- Would you choose to come here again if you had another choice?
- What is required during the season and the off-season?

After Your Visit: Evaluate

- Did you find the coaching staff approachable? Honest?
- Were they clear about academics being the priority?
- Will I grow in this program?
- Were the players friendly?
- Would I be happy to be at this school if I never played?