



# Your College Recruitment Checklist

## Why Do High School Athletes Need a Recruitment Checklist?

Literally hundreds of tasks are necessary to achieve your goal of playing at the college of your dreams—ranging from tearing it up on the field to making sure your No. 2 pencil is sharpened at SAT time. Each task, no matter how significant or small, presents both risk and opportunity. The following checklist is designed to help you avoid common pitfalls made by unprepared athletes and make yourself the best recruit possible.

### It's Never Too Early To Begin the Recruitment Process

If you're reading this, hopefully you are at the early stage of your high school athletic career. With graduation four years away, why should you concentrate on organizing your recruitment efforts now? As an athlete, you probably understand that those players who get up the earliest and work the hardest are the most prepared come game day. Recruitment is no different. You need to start working early and consistently to give you the best possible chance of being accepted by the college you want.

Many student athletes won't prepare early, and by the time of their senior year, they will scramble to perform the tasks necessary to attract the schools of their choice. Many think if they just play well, the offers will come. Maybe for the one-in-a-million star athlete... but for most, they need to work as hard off as they do on the field.

It's much more than writing letters to coaches and putting together a highlight film. There are many things to remember and pay attention to early on. The information in this resource will help put you in the right mindset to focus on your athletic career during and after high school.

### Refer to This Document Often

With school, social life, and athletics, it's easy to become distracted and forget what you need to do to make yourself an attractive college recruit. Keep this document handy - in a place to which you can refer to it often. Make sure you're following the steps and accomplishing your tasks. It will make a world of difference when it's time to start the recruitment process.

If possible, share this resource with a teammate or fellow athlete so you can keep each other accountable and on track to achieving your individual goals. When you work with someone who shares your dreams of playing on the college level, it's easier to accomplish the tasks laid out in the following document.

## Freshman and Sophomore Years

As stated above, it's never too early to start - and that means your freshman and sophomore years. Remember to set seasonal, yearly, and overall high school athletic and academic goals. Follow these steps to make help you achieve them:

- Be realistic with your goals.
- Write them down.
- Keep them where you'll see them regularly
- Assess your progress at the end of each season/school quarter

### Your Academic Life

Maintain good academic standing. Ultimately, you want to play for an academic institution and better your education. So your attention to your grades and standing within your school is vitally important.

- Don't cut class.
- Strive for good grades.
- Meet with your guidance counselor to discuss NCAA curriculum and grade requirements.
- Take advantage of study halls and tutors.
- Don't cheat.
- Show respect to teachers and fellow students.
- Avoid detentions and suspensions.

### Your Personal Life

An athlete's character is more scrutinized than ever in the world of college sports. Coaches don't want players whose off-the-field activities could be a potential distraction or attract negative publicity. Be aware of your off-field lifestyle and the image it portrays.

- Choose friends wisely; avoid troublesome crowds.
- Keep online profiles clean.
- Avoid drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.
- Don't fight.
- Don't break the law.
- Adhere to a reasonable curfew.

## Freshman and Sophomore Years (continued)

### Your Athletic Life

Remember that your goal is to be recruited by a school based on your athletic accomplishments. In addition for striving for excellence on the field, it's important to maintain a professionalism as you play. Remember that you are evaluated when you're on the sidelines as well as when you're playing, so be the kind of player coaches want on their teams. There are several things to remember, but if you can adhere to them, you'll set yourself apart from other recruits.

- Maintain poise and sportsmanship at all times.
- Cheer on teammates.
- Respond to referees and/or bad calls in a professional manner.
- Interact positively with coaches on the sideline.
- Keep your head up. Don't pout regardless of score or situation.
- Avoid fighting.
- Celebrate with class.

### It's About Self-Promotion

As you progress in your high school athletics, you'll accomplish milestones in which coaches and sports program directors will be interested. Make sure you have a system in which you can quickly reference your achievements.

- Have all athletic competitions videotaped for future use.
- Create a filing system to organize athletic awards, newspaper clippings and outstanding achievements.
- Create a resume that includes academic and athletic achievements.

Of course, in promoting yourself and your athletic skills, it's important to have an honest evaluation of your own abilities so you don't over-promise and under-deliver. Here are ways you can assess your development during every stage of your high school sports journey.

- Talk to your coaches - get their honest evaluations.
- Measure yourself against other players at your position in your state/district/conference.
- Compare your accomplishments to the high school accomplishments of players on rosters of colleges for which you think you could play.

## Freshman and Sophomore Years (continued)

### Identifying Potential Colleges and Universities

One of the most important parts about your early recruitment campaign process is looking at different schools and thinking about which ones you might want to attend. There are several things to keep in mind during this effort.

- Begin thinking about the academic area of study you might want to major in, and research which schools excel in that area.
- Solicit information about colleges by talking to *friends, guidance counselors, and the college's alumni.*
- Talk with parents or guardians about the *cost of each school and what you can afford, location, academic opportunities and programs, and the academic and athletic standards of the school.*
- Create a target list of colleges in each of the following categories: *Likely admission, safety net, and reach.*

### Start Your Recruitment Campaign Now

Once you've made an initial evaluation of the colleges you might want to attend,

Even in your early high school years, you should have a good idea of what universities you might want to attend when you graduate. It will help you be ahead of the game in your Junior and Senior years.

- Familiarize yourself with the NCAA Guide for the College-Bound Athlete.
- Research the best non-school sponsored athletic leagues in your area—club teams, AAU, summer leagues, etc.
- Participate in non-school sponsored athletic competition.
- Find name, address and other information about coach on school's website.
- Send initial contact letters to college coaches at schools you are interested in attending.
- Express your interest in playing for the program.
- Include athletic and academic resume.
- Attach a schedule of your games for the upcoming seasons.
- Create a filing system for materials and info you receive from colleges and coaches.

## Freshman and Sophomore Years (continued)

### Other Early Recruitment Campaign Tasks

- Complete and return all questionnaires.
- Inform college coaches about camps and clinics you'll be attending.
- Attend camps and clinics at schools you are interested in attending.
- Open a dialogue with your high school coaches about the college coaches who have contacted them about you and the colleges that most interest you.
- Begin pulling clips and creating a highlight tape.
- Attend a college competition in your sport.
- Contact parents of athletes on the college team's roster to find out if they're happy with their son's or daughter's experiences with the team.
- Observe the way the coach interacts with his team.
- Gauge the level of play compared to your ability.
- Send follow-up letters to coaches who haven't responded to your initial contact.

### A few other things to remember:

- Identify athletic weaknesses; research safe and effective methods, or professionals, to help you eliminate them.
- Develop good relationships with teachers who will eventually write your college letters of recommendation.
- Get involved in extracurricular and volunteer activities. Consider playing multiple sports to develop and display well-rounded athleticism.
- Assess benefits of using a recruiting service.

## Junior Year

During your Junior year of high school, your recruitment campaign efforts really start to ramp up. What you accomplish this year will go a long way in helping you achieve your goal of being accepted to the school of your choice.

### Get In a College-Bound Mindset

First and foremost, you need to focus on what it takes to get into college. In addition, start thinking of life as a college athlete - what is it like? How is it different from your time in high school? These tips will help you understand and prepare for your future.

- Register, prep for and take standardized tests.
- Register with NCAA Eligibility Center (must be done by end of junior year).
- Talk to athletes from your school that now play at the collegiate level. Ask about the level of competition, how college life and sports differ from their high school experience, as well as any additional advice they have to offer.
- Ask high school coach call college coaches to recommend you as an athlete.

### When Coaches call

If you pique a coach's interest, he/she will want an initial discussion over the phone. Prepare a list of questions for coaches when they call (they can call after May 1 of your junior year for football and after July 1 for most other sports). Cover these topics:

- Their level of interest
- Chance of an official visit
- Possibility of a scholarship
- Who they have at your position (height, weight, stats)
- Your upcoming game schedule and the possibility of their attendance

## Junior Year (continued)

### Schedule and Take Unofficial Visits

Get acquainted with your potential colleges and the coaches for whom you might play. Face and phone time is important. Get to know your future school and let them get to know you.

- Find time to meet with coaches around their busy schedules.
- Update wardrobe with clothes appropriate for meetings with college coaches.
- Bring pen and notepad, and have a few questions ready about the program, the coach's level of interest and his or her plans to remain at the school during your four years.
- Provide coaches with your highlight tape and stat sheet.
- Talk to players on the team.
- Check out the facilities.
- Go to a class in your area of interest.
- Keep a journal to list pros and cons of each school and coaching staff after visits.

### Following Up

Meeting with a coach is one important; making them remember you is just as essential. Following up on your meeting will help you stand out among the dozens of athletes with whom they will meet. It shows commitment and dedication. Here are a few easy ways you can continue the impression you make.

- Send a thank-you note after any meeting with a coach.
- Continue to update college coaches about your athletic successes.
- Update highlight video with recent clips.



## Senior Year

You're approaching the finish line of your high school athletic career. If you've been following the actions outlined in this document, you should be much more prepared than other students and be in a better position to respond effectively to recruitment efforts.

### Time to Apply

By now you should have narrowed down the schools in which you're interested and eliminated those in which you definitely have no interest. So now it's time to start the application process for your target schools.

- Decide whether to apply early action or early decision.
- Write application essays early so you have time to edit and perfect them.
- Create timetable for all application deadlines.
- Ask teachers for recommendations.
- Complete the rest of applications and mail before deadlines.

### Visiting Schools and Meeting with Coaches

You probably started your meetings with schools and coaches during your Junior year, but those discussions you'll have during your Senior year are your most meaningful. It's at this time when coaches need to make their decisions, and the better your meeting goes, the more likely you will be on the recruitment lists. Following these steps can help you ensure you make a good impression.

- Be prepared for an in-school visit from a college coach at any time. Dress appropriately and have questions ready.
- Set time standards as to when you want to take phone calls from coaches.
- Plan and take official visits. Remember, only five are allowed.
- Talk to as many players as possible, not just the happy ones.
- Go to a class in your field of interest.
- Stay on campus.
- Always conduct yourself properly.
- Keep a journal to list pros and cons of each school and coaching staff after visits.

## Senior Year (continued)

### Academic Wrap-up

No matter how well your coach meetings go, it won't mean much if your grades falter. Colleges can't accept you if you show you're not willing to commit to your studies the way you commit to your sport.

- Calculate your GPA and find out your class rank.
- Request official transcript from guidance counselor.
- Retake standardized tests if necessary.
- Avoid senioritis—continue to take challenging courses and strive for good grades.

### Evaluating Your Financial Situation

Being accepted is an outstanding milestone, but you need to ensure you have the financial ability to attend your new school.

- Assess financial needs by talking with parents and various schools' financial aid offices.
- Apply for financial aid.
- Research and apply for alternative sources of funds.
- Once you begin receiving financial aid offers from colleges, share them with other coaches to improve your final offer.

### Time to Make Your Choice

For four years, you've put in the work, and universities have noticed. If you've committed yourself to your sport, academics, and the recruitment campaign process, you could very well have several offers from schools. More than likely, you have had a good idea about which one you'd choose if they invited you to attend their institution. Now it's time to make your decision.

- Ask college coaches to waive application fees.
- Narrow college choices to your top three opportunities.
- Make final decision.
- Notify all college coaches you've been speaking with of your final decision.
- Contact your new college coach to receive strength and conditioning manual.

## Key Terms

As you'll see, these rules are inefficient. They make it tough for college coaches to evaluate prospects. The following things are limited by the NCAA at various times of the year: prospects visiting a college campus (officially or unofficially), coaches visiting a prospect's school, coaches visiting a prospect's home, written communication, and electronic communication.

### Contact period

The most wide-open time. During this time, coaches can visit with prospects and families regardless of location. In-person contact is permitted once per week. Note that a coach cannot visit a school multiple times in one week if it has more than one prospect. Electronic and written communications are also permitted.

This is when tales of coaches praising Mama's cooking are born — during in-home visits.

### Evaluation period

Considerably more restrictive than the contact period in one key way: off campus face-to-face contact is not permitted. That means no home visits. Coaches can still visit a prospect's school. Visits to schools are ostensibly for the purpose of evaluation. Prospects can visit colleges and receive written and electronic communication. Many scholarship offers go out in this period.

### Quiet period

The quiet period tightens things a bit more, preventing any off-campus contact or viewing. Visits to the college's campus and written or electronic communications are still permitted.

Coaches often try to have prospects visit campus unofficially during this time in the spring and early summer, so that they can become familiar with campus.

### Dead period

The dead period is the most restrictive. No in-person contact is allowed, even if a prospect makes a visit to the college campus. Written and electronic communications are still permitted.

And yet, prospects still do decide to commit to schools in late December and early January, often because they've considered all their options, taken all their visits, and are ready to pull the trigger.

## Key Terms (continued)

### Recruiting dates

The NCAA's recruiting calendar is confusing and written for compliance offices. Using 2015-2016 as an example, here's a simplified version, though it obviously changes slightly from year to year:

**February 6, 2015 through April 14, 2015 — Quiet Period**

**April 15, 2015 through May 31, 2015 — Evaluation Period for Class of 2015**

During the evaluation period (April 15 through May 31, 2015) college staffs (recruiters) have the opportunity to conduct both athletic and academic evaluations of potential recruits. Days not used for evaluation during this time window are otherwise considered "quiet." An authorized college recruiter may use one off campus visit to evaluate a prospective student athlete's academic performance and one visit to assess his athletic ability.

**June 1, 2015 through July 31, 2015 — Quiet Period**

**June 29, 2015 through July 12, 2015 — Dead Period**

### It's Up To You

The information in the pages here give you the guidance and tools necessary to help give you an edge in your goal of being recruited by the university of your choice. Like winning any competition, it's up to you to do the work and make the commitment. Ultimately, no one can do it for you. You know what it takes to win, and whether on the field or off, your dedication will make all the difference.

Good luck!