

# RECRUITING 101

The tips, tricks and pitfalls every player and parent should know when looking to play at the collegiate volleyball level.

*Information to help you navigate the volleyball recruiting process.*



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## Recruiting Overview

It does not matter if you are a highly sought-after recruit or simply a good player with drive and ambition. Every recruitable volleyball player needs a method to assess and evaluate colleges. Please understand that no method will bring with it a guarantee. There just simply aren't any when it comes to recruiting. You see, there is a big difference between attending your dream school and attending the right school. You may not be recruited to your dream school but that does not mean that the right school is not still out there. Focus on stacking the odds in your favor and uncover the best option for you.

The purpose of recruiting on your end should be to find the best school – for YOU. It needs to be the right fit and it needs to equip you for your career in the real world. It needs to have the right academics, athletics and social life. It needs to be the right size for you as well as the right distance from home. Your needs will encompass almost every facet of college life. When viewing the world of recruiting from this perspective, it can seem a bit overwhelming.

The big three areas that need to be explored:

1. Academics

Finding a school that has your area of academics is paramount. If you do not know what you want to concentrate on, then work in generalities (history, science, math, medical, business, etc). Even if you know what you want, still work in generalities since there are many students who change their majors once they get on campus. Give yourself options. For example, keep your Pre-Med designation but be sure that the school has other medical avenues in case you decide you want to go into Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physician's Assistant, Nursing, Medical Technology, etc...

2. Volleyball program

It really comes down to finding the right fit and knowing what you want from your athletic experience. The areas you will want to consider are the coaching staff, teammates, level of competition, your role on the team and the overall program success. It will be a balancing act but figure out which are most important and make sure those areas will be satisfied first.

3. Social

The social aspect is huge and cannot be overlooked. Every school has its own unique vibe. Each school that you visit is going to give you a list of potential groups you can get involved in once on campus. Initially, it will sound impressive. The reality is that you, as a student-athlete, probably will not do that much from the list simply due to a lack of time. The team's social culture will determine much of your social life anyway so make sure you actually "like" the players on the team. Make sure the team's culture, along with that of the school, fits your personality. The best way to figure out if



you belong somewhere will sometimes come down to whether or not you can “see” yourself at the school ...or that gut feeling that says, “This is the place for me”. Look into the future and see if these potential teammates are the type-of-people you want as lifelong friends. If you cannot see it, then do not chance it.

What you need to understand is that despite you and the coach having the same purpose (i.e. volleyball recruitment) – you do not necessarily share the same focus. You both are looking to find acceptance – but the coach is looking for acceptance from the best volleyball player they can find. You, on the other hand, are looking for acceptance from the school that provides the best mix of academic program, volleyball team and social situation. Your job is much tougher and that’s why the responsibility of getting recruited needs to fall squarely upon your shoulders, not someone else’s.

### **Recruiting Services: Do You Need One?**

The short answer to this question is – “NO”. You do not *need* a recruiting service to be recruited. In fact, you probably stand a better chance of being recruited to the right school by following the steps in this recruiting guide and taking control of the recruiting process for yourself. In addition, you just saved somewhere in the range of \$200 to \$2,000.

Recruiting services can be expensive and most do not deliver anything that you cannot do yourself for a fraction of the price.

Most recruiting services work the same as an advertising agency. They charge a fee to promote you by various means. These businesses will also try to upsell you on some service, which is usually not worth the money. Upselling is a sales strategy where the seller will provide opportunities to purchase related products or services, often for the sole purpose of making a larger sale.

These companies may include offering you an “objective” skill assessment of your abilities. You should pass on this service. College coaches do not put much stock in other people’s opinions, especially from a recruiting service. College coaches know that the money-trail leads back to you, and that it would be bad business to assess you poorly. Since you now know that these assessments are not objective and that they will overstate your abilities, simply move on.

The biggest scam is that most recruiting services just mass email (spam) coaches with your information. That’s it. Contrary to their brochures and propaganda, they do not have special access to the coaches – no more than you and your family. You should be looking to make a special contact with the coaches anyway. A contact they will remember and want to follow up on.



## Where Do I Get Seen?

The reality is club volleyball is the best opportunity for college coaches to see you play. College coaches recruit mainly from club because it affords them the opportunity to not only see you improve over the course of six months, but it also is the most efficient way to see as many recruitable athletes as possible. Most college coaches have some type of limitations that will not allow them to recruit as much as they would like. Those constraints could be financial or they may be driven by NCAA regulations. Regardless, college coaches just cannot be everywhere and club tournaments afford them the best bang-for-the-buck.

And while some coaches may make a special trip out to see a high school match of a highly recruited player, the reality is you probably will not be seen during your high school season alone. The college season coincides with the high school season and college coaches have their own teams to deal with during that time period. In addition, most high school matches do not have enough good players playing in them to make it worth the college coach's time. That's why club volleyball is such an important recruiting tool for the college coach – the best athletes, all in one location. Those recruits who choose a club wisely and work hard to improve each season will have more advantages and better odds than those that do not.

Summer camps can also be an awesome way to get recruited, especially once you have taken the initiative to narrow down your school choices. You will not necessarily be going there to learn and improve as much as showcase your skills for the college coaches themselves. It gives the coaches an opportunity to see you up-close-and-personal in their gym. When a coach can put you through their drills, in their gym, they get a better sense as to your abilities. Please remember that recruiting is a two-way street. Attending summer camps is also an excellent opportunity for you to get a look at campus as well as the coaching staff in action.

There is one key point about summer camps you should know about though. Summer camps are fundraisers for their program and are not necessarily all about recruiting. You may be invited to come to summer camp for any number of reasons but make sure you know the full recruiting story before you shell out hundreds of dollars on camp fees and travel expenses. You always want to have your eyes wide open.



## Tools You Need

Here are the things you need for the recruiting process:

- Recruiting profile
- A skills video or game footage that can be put on YouTube.
- Some detective skills in order to find email addresses, phone numbers and other information about potential schools.

College coaches do everything electronically these days. The coaches access their email and files while on the road with their iPhones and Androids, and they would prefer instant communication rather than waiting for a letter. They would prefer a YouTube link rather than waiting for a DVD of your skills video. They would prefer that your profile was attached to an email rather than a hard copy that they need to file away. Recruiting is a technology-driven process, so be prepared to work in that world.

Your academic and athletic profile doesn't need to be anything extensive or professionally produced – but it does need to convey the right information. Most recruiting profiles have WAY too much in them and the pertinent information will get lost on the page. One area that can be eliminated is your stats – high school and club. College coaches have little need for them because stats are affected by two things; the level of competition and the ability of the stat taker. The coaches just do not think that highly of either to warrant putting stats on your profile.

Here are the areas you need to address in the profile:

- Contact information – address, phone numbers, email addresses, parent's names
- Year of graduation & volleyball position
- Intended major in college
- Club team with your jersey number; High school team with jersey number
- Contact information for someone at the club: Club director, recruiting coordinator and/or club coach
- ACT/SAT scores, G.P.A and class rank.
- Physical stats – height, jump-touch and dominant hand
- Anything interesting from academics and athletics (National Honor Society, major awards in volleyball and other sports, major academic awards, etc). Do not go crazy with these but if you were an All-State volleyball player or won a significant academic competition, then note that. College coaches do not care if you were the 7<sup>th</sup> grade basketball MVP though.
- Anything interesting about you outside of athletics and academics (accomplished musician, lifeguard, met famous movie star, traveled to China, etc). Make yourself memorable to the coach. One small tidbit about traveling to China or making a save at the YMCA pool can go a long way in getting you recruited. This type of information is a conversation starter for coaches when they talk to you on the phone.



## The Skills Video

The skills video is the next piece to the recruiting puzzle and it is intended to entice the coaches to see you play in-person. Your athletic video can either be a skills video that highlights your best attributes or it can be game footage of you playing. It can also be a combination of skills video and some game footage. Regardless, it is just a way of showing a glimpse of who you are and what you can do. It needs to be your “red-carpet” moment.

When creating a video, just remember that most do not get played all the way through, so prioritize the most impressive parts to the beginning. The best attacks ...the best digs ...the most spectacular plays should be the first clips the coaches see. NOTE: It is completely acceptable to not have every skill represented. Just make sure that your best skills are.

Please realize, video editing is an art, not a science. With that said, there is no “right” way to create or produce a video. If you ask 99 coaches what they want in a video, you will receive 99 different answers. Everyone has a different opinion as to drill selection, camera angles, number of repetitions, etc... Again, the mission of the video is to be influential enough to entice the coaches to see you play live. If your video does that, job well done.

## The Five-Step Recruiting Roadmap – What You Should DO !!!

1) Assess Yourself

2) Identify Potential Colleges and Universities

3) Research Volleyball Programs

4) Build Relationships with the Coaches

5) Make Decisions

### Assess yourself

Assessing what you want is a critical component to the recruiting process. Let's begin by using four fundamental questions as your initial filter.

1. What do I want to study?
2. How far away from home do I want to attend college?
3. What size school do I want?
4. What is my jump-touch and is that measurement high enough to attend the type of schools on my list?

Maybe you can easily answer these questions, or maybe you haven't given it much thought. More than likely, you are somewhere in-between. Proceeding into the recruiting world without answering these questions is very similar to heading out on vacation without thinking about your destination. If you do not know where you're going on vacation, then how will you know when you get there? In my experience, most athletes *do* have an idea of



what they want but they just haven't assessed themselves enough to objectively define it and write it down.

### Course of Study

"What do you want to do when you grow up?" How many times have you been asked that? Hundreds probably! And if you know the answer – that's great! But if you do not, that's okay too. College is there to help you figure out what you want to do in life.

Please understand that you do not have to know right now what you're going to do for the rest of your life. The important idea is to decipher your strengths and your interests. Do you like math ...science ...acting ...music ...computers? These are the concrete answers that you need to answer. Go broad at first and later on you can refine your interests into something specific.

### Location

How far away from home do you want to be? Many recruits head off to college to "get away" from home only to transfer to a school closer to home a year later. It is perfectly natural to think that life is so much better "out there". The reality is there will be joys – and there will be problems wherever you go. You just need to determine which set of *joys* – as well as which set of *problems* you want.

Be true to yourself and know who you are. Just because everyone is staying close to home or everyone is leaving and going away to school doesn't mean you have to. Make the best decision for *you*, independent of other people, and this may include a parent but especially as it relates to significant others. If they truly care about you, then they will want you to succeed academically and athletically at whatever institution the process leads you to.

It is imperative you "know" how important home is to you. Homesickness is acrippler and almost everyone gets homesick at some point. It might be just after you get dropped off. It might come once the newness has worn off or it might come after your first fight with your roommate. But just know that it will probably come. Just focus on getting through that day and work through it. If you can make it through that first semester, you have a very good chance of beating it. The homesickness will subside and later on, you'll laugh about those "hard" times.

### School Size

Finally, let's look at how the size of the school can bring clarity to your list. Do you want a small school where you will know everyone – or do you want a big school where you can meet a ton of new people? Perhaps you want a big school with a football team for that true collegiate experience? Or maybe something in-between?

There is no right or wrong answer to what size school is best for you since there is literally every size school available. Just go with your gut instinct at first because you will have time to refine your answers as you start making campus visits.



## Athletic Talent

College coaches qualify potential front-row recruits using the jump touch because the jump touch is the best measure of how physical you can play the sport of volleyball. The jump touch encompasses your height, reach and vertical all in one measurement.

One thing to note is that the jump touch can vary several inches based upon your training cycle or level of fatigue. It is not a static number. If you reach a measurement of 9' 8" on Monday and touch 9' 6" on Tuesday, you don't need to be scared. If you touch 9' 8", then you are a 9' 8" recruit – and that is what you should communicate to the coaches. The coaches understand that you don't always jump your max every single day of your life. Just don't let it become a habit to touch below your maximum.

While athleticism is important, skills are also assessed. Skills encompass so many parts of the game too like court awareness, game-IQ, consistency, as well as intangibles assets like focus, court-demeanor, leadership, and emotional control, among others. As if that weren't enough, coaches will also assess you as a person. They will want to see how you interact with your coach, other players, officials and especially your parents. Simply put, there are eyes watching OFF the court, just as much as ON.

## Identify Potential Schools

With so many colleges and universities out there, we need a way of identifying schools that meet our criteria. One of the websites to identify schools is [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com). As you go through the site's college search, it will take you through eight criteria:

- Type of School (size, 4yr, 2 yr, public, private, etc...)
- Location
- Majors
- Cost & Financial Aid
- Admissions
- Sports & Activities
- Housing & Programs
- Specialized Options

## Research Volleyball Programs

Once you have made a good-sized list of schools that fit your academic criteria, then it is time to start re researching the volleyball programs. Go to each school's website and make notes concerning:

- the head coach's bio and contact information
- the assistants' bios and contact information
- overall record
- conference record



- conference finish
- post-season success
- recruiting class
- roster size
- number of players at your position
- class of the players at your position
- any other pertinent information you deem important.

In your research you will soon find that just because a school is academically acceptable will not mean that it will necessarily be a match athletically. You need to know what you are looking for athletically. Are you searching for a school where you can play right away? Do you want to be part of a winning program? What role do you want to play on the team? These are all important aspects that student-athletes don't ask themselves enough.

## Build Relationships with Coaches

After you've done your research on the schools, the next thing to do is to start contacting the coaches. It is time to begin a marketing campaign that highlights your attributes and qualities. Just as in every marketing blitz, there is a right and wrong way to go about it though. It is important to contact the coaches properly so that you'll get a positive action.

## Emails & Phone Calls

To begin, you *must* make the initial email personal – do not spam the coaches! Just because it might be easier for you does not make it right. If writing 40 personalized emails to coaches is the hardest job you have in this process, then you really do not have it that bad. This part may be time-consuming, but it just might be the most essential part of the process. As they say, you do not get a second chance to make a first impression – so do it *right*.

The telephone call is a great time to show off your personality. Coaches are often sold more from your phone calls than even your campus visit. Coming across as mature, professional, fun-to-talk to, energizing, etc... goes a long way in influencing a college coach as to your viability on their team.

Now remember, NCAA Division I & II college coaches are limited in that they cannot call you until after your sophomore year. What you want to do is prepare for when your window comes open. If you are not comfortable with speaking on the phone, find a way to talk to strangers in a work or volunteer position. The only way to get better at speaking with strangers ...is to speak with strangers.

Lastly, preparation for your phone calls with the coaches will create confidence. Be sure to have some stock answers to questions memorized. The three most basic questions asked



deal with your career goals, free-time activities, and what you're looking for in a college. Be smooth and confident while answering these three questions and you'll come across like a person who knows what they want. College coaches are influenced by confident answers.

## The Campus Visit

Campus visits are two-way streets. It is an opportunity for the coaches to get to know you – but it is also your opportunity to get to know the coaches and players, as well as see campus. This is important because your job is harder than the coach's job. The coach already knows the school and their team. They only need to focus on you and decide whether or not you are a good fit. You, on the other hand are trying to take in a lot more information.

Here are the key points to any visit:

- Before making plans for an unofficial visit to a school where you will incur expenses, it is completely appropriate to ask what the coach's intention is for your visit. You can simply ask, "If things go well on the visit, do you intend to make me an offer?" If you are footing the bill to come to campus, you should know if there is a serious interest on the coach's part.
- Be prompt
- Dress appropriately. Be you – but lean towards the conservative side of you.
- Bring an umbrella, jacket (or snow gear depending upon the weather) because you will be walking campus
- Be excited and smile. Most coaches got into coaching because they love people – and it is hard to facilitate a relationship when the recruit has the charisma of a cucumber.
- Meet as many of the players as you can, especially the younger ones.
- Do not be afraid to ask the tough questions. The tendency is for most recruits to shy away from discussing scholarship money, possible playing time, position, roles on the team, etc... These are the very reasons why you're on campus. You are there to talk to the coaches and know where you stand.
- Make sure you speak to the head coach as much as possible. That person is the decision-maker.
- Make sure you, the recruit, do the talking. Do not let your parents speak for you.
- If possible, try to visit on a school day so that you can get a true slice of campus life.
- Use the questions at the back of this guide to get an idea of possible questions for the visit. Not every question will be important to you – but a few of them just may help you break the tie between two awesome schools.

## Recruiting Calendar

Recruiting has a rhythm and it is important for you to be in-step with it. Over the course of a calendar year recruiting technically never stops, but there are certainly busier time periods than others. The time period with the least amount of recruiting activity is usually in the fall when the collegiate season is in full swing. February through April is a hot time for recruiting as well as the month of June. Summer camps are the focus during July so recruiting still happens but it is more focused on having recruits to campus.



The NCAA DI coaches have to deal with dead periods and quiet periods during the recruiting year. The entire month of May is a “quiet period”. A quiet period simply means that coaches cannot leave campus. They can still have correspondence and they can have you on campus for a visit. That is unlike the dead period in November. The difference between a dead period and a quiet period is that a dead period has all of the restrictions of a quiet period but on-campus contact is not allowed either. One thing to note is that the dead period restrictions only pertain to NCAA DI coaches - NCAA DII, DIII, NAIA and NJCAA coaches can still be out recruiting.

## The Process of Recruitment

Every program in the nation has a slightly different way of recruiting. Some are very organized and methodical while others are less structured. Some staffs recruit as-a-whole while others will have one person do the majority of the work. No matter the style, structure or level of organization, there is a pattern to recruiting.

Here are the steps of the recruiting process for the typical college program:

1. AWARENESS of recruit – Coaches can become aware of recruits in many different ways (personal evaluation, newspaper, word of mouth, student-initiated, other coaches, etc). This is where recruits can help themselves the most. Get on the school’s list and make the coaches aware of you.
2. EVALUATION of recruit either by video or in-person – For efficiency, the video may work best but the goal of the video should be to get the coach to see you in person. If you pique their interest, they will come see you play, especially if you contact them appropriately.



3. CONTACT by the coach – If the coach is interested, they will contact you by questionnaire, email, phone or through an intermediary. Giving the coaches your information first makes this process easier and anything you can do to make it easier for the coaches will reap rewards at some point.
4. CAMPUS VISITATION – The next step is to visit campus. Most of the time the visit will be requested by the coach, but you also can request one too.
5. OFFER made (or not made)

While each step in the recruiting process is distinct, there is no specific time frame for the stages. You may get no further than step two with one college while you may go from step one to step four in one day with another. There is just no telling what will happen in each situation. When things work out, most often it is because hard work has met opportunity. Other times, it was just about being in the right place at the right time.

What makes recruiting challenging is that the NCAA puts constraints on how *coaches* are to make contact with Prospective Student-Athletes (or PSA's). You see, PSA's from different classes will have different constraints. For example, a high school sophomore may not receive phone calls from college coaches but high school seniors can. Here are the NCAA DI & DII rules in a nutshell (as of the time of this publication):

- You may email or call a coach *anytime* that you'd like but they may not necessarily be able to reciprocate.
- Starting June 15<sup>th</sup> between your Sophomore and Junior, DI & DII coaches can call, email, and/or text. This was a more recent change to allow DII recruiters to stay in step with the speed of the recruitment process.
- An athletic questionnaire, as well as summer camp info, may be sent out at any time by the volleyball program. This questionnaire is merely a request for information and it initially shows interest on the part of the school. By filling it out and sending it back, it also shows some interest on your part. My advice is to fill out *every* questionnaire that comes your way. It will never hurt you ... and you just may be surprised where it leads.
- At the DII, DIII, and NAIA levels, a coach can freely speak with you anytime that you step onto their campus. That would include campus visits, summer camps, theatre productions, any athletic contest held on the site of the campus, etc. ... There are a number of reasons you may be on campus and any time this happens, you can meet with the coach and talk.
  - New restrictions have been put in place in order to slow down the recruiting process at the DI level. Unofficial visits are no longer allowed in your freshman and sophomore year. You may visit campus, but you may not arrange it with the athletic department/volleyball program, and you may not have contact with the athletic department/volleyball program.
- Unofficial visits are where you personally pay the expenses to visit campus. There are no limits to the number of unofficial visits you can take (one you are able to according to the guidelines of the Division).



- Official visits, on the other hand, are visits where the school pays the expenses of the recruit. You are limited to five visits at the DI level, and unlimited at the DII, DIII, and NAIA level. Official visits may happen after June 15 after your sophomore year at the DII level, and after Sept 1 of your Junior year at the DI level.
- Transfer Portal, is a common phrase that you might hear throughout the recruiting process. The Portal is an online database that current college athletes can choose to enter if they are looking to transfer to another school. Once listed in the transfer portal other college coaches can reach out to the student-athlete to essentially go through the recruiting process all over again.

Remember, most of these rules are for NCAA DI and DII college coaches. If a coach works for an NCAA DIII, NAIA or a junior college, they have very few recruiting rules. They have the freedom to contact you, call you and speak with you at almost any time.

### Recruiting Around The Rules

So the question begs, “How are the NCAA college coaches recruiting kids they cannot officially talk to?” College coaches recruit these kids by using an intermediary, like a club coach, club director or high school coach. This process begins with contact to the intermediary asking them to pass along the interest of the college coach on to the recruit.

What is legal and illegal is defined by the NCAA. The NCAA rulebook, if you have never seen it, resembles a college textbook. It is an accumulation of rules from over the years that has come to resemble Frankenstein’s monster rather than a clear-cut guide for recruiting.

What you need to understand about the NCAA rules is that while they can be confusing and difficult to navigate, they are actually there to protect you from the coaches. They keep you from being harassed and having to field a countless number of phone calls. The rules are also there to keep the playing field level among all the institutions, big or small. It is not the intent of college athletics to be a cut-throat business, though in some sports it has become just that.

Though the rules may be strict and confusing, you can use these rules to your advantage. You see, most of the recruits that you are competing with for a spot on the college teams are WAITING to be recruited – and their mistake is YOUR edge. If others are waiting to be contacted, imagine what would happen if you were pro-active and contacted the college coaches *first*? It is very difficult for the coaches to communicate with you due to the NCAA rules currently in place but with the accelerated recruiting pace, they need to be in contact with you sooner rather than later. This is where you, if you act early, can get onto the coaches recruiting radar by properly communicating with them.



## A Quick List for Parents

- DO allow your child to do the communicating with the college coaches. They are the ones who need to build a relationship with the coaches, not you.
- DO NOT force your opinion upon your child. It will probably lead to a less-than-optimal outcome.
- DO explore colleges with your kids. You need to formulate an educated opinion for that important time when your daughter asks for advice. It may ultimately be your daughter's decision but she probably will not make it without your input and guidance.
- DO NOT try to "fix" every little problem. There will be issues that will come across your daughter's path when it comes to volleyball and college recruiting. Learning to be resourceful and problem-solve are skills that need to be developed by her.
- DO call a college coach if you are unsure about something they communicated to your daughter. It doesn't matter whether it is a scholarship offer, a timeline, the rules governing recruiting, or anything else. College coaches realize that what is said to your daughter while recruiting may not always be understood or expressed adequately to you. Remember, you and your daughter can *always* call a college coach.
- DO realize that you, as a parent, are being watched. When college coaches are out recruiting they are watching both you and your daughter. They will not necessarily stop recruiting your daughter because of your behavior but it may give them some cause for concern. The best advice is to stay classy.

## Levels of College Volleyball

To understand how you, as an athlete, can fit into a college program, it is important to define the different levels. Colleges and universities are divided into associations and divisions. At the root of the separation is philosophy and money. It is a common misunderstanding to think that colleges are classified by enrollment size, like we do for high schools. The reality is colleges and universities get to decide which association they align with as well as which division's rules they will follow. Those rules will then determine the scholarship level of the school.

Collegiate volleyball is governed by three different associations; the NCAA, the NAIA and the NJCAA. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is the biggest, most well-known, and governs four-year colleges. The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) is the smaller of the four-year governing bodies and mostly serves smaller, private colleges. The National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) governs the two-year schools. Schools align with one of these governing bodies based more upon philosophy than anything else. We will look at each in depth.



The largest governing body is the NCAA with around 900 members and those members are divided into three divisions. We most commonly recognize them by the terms DI, DII and DIII. Each of the divisions is regulated by a set of rules with the most significant difference being how much scholarship money they can give out. For Volleyball, DI programs can give up to twelve (12) full scholarships and DII can give up to eight (8) full scholarships. How DI and DII are allowed to use those scholarships will be discussed later. For DIII, there is no athletic scholarship money given, although the financial aid available can make these schools reasonable.

Besides scholarship money, the other noticeable difference between the divisions is in the schedule. The DI season lasts about two weeks longer in the fall than the DII season, and the DII season lasts about two weeks longer than DIII. In the off-season, DI and DII teams have an instructional season where teaching and conditioning are the focus. Teams will work in small groups early in the semester and then come together for full-team practices later on. Volleyball programs will usually use a portion of those dates for practice and the remaining dates for scrimmages during the spring season.

The NAIA is comprised of four-year colleges, but it is about 1/3 the size of the NCAA. Most of these institutions are private in nature and they usually have smaller enrollments. Many of these schools will be unique by either having some religious affiliation or they will be strong in a specific major such as architecture, engineering, art, business, etc...

The NAIA also divides their schools into three divisions. For volleyball, the divisions do not really matter too much since the NAIA combines the Division I and Division II schools into the same national championship tournament. The divisions seem to be more important for other sports - like basketball.

As for scholarship money, NAIA DI and NAIA DII schools can offer up to eight (8) scholarships and Division III schools cannot offer any athletic money. Many institutions within the NAIA have been hurt quite a bit by the economic downturn so scholarship money varies. If you are being recruited by an NAIA school, it would be important to ask about their available scholarship money and their philosophy on how that money is doled out.

The NJCAA is comprised of about 300 two-year schools, and it too has three divisions. The Junior Colleges and Community Colleges who align with NJCAA DI are allowed up to 14 full scholarships. These scholarships include tuition, room & board and books. DII also has 14 scholarships, but they only include tuition. DIII is, again, not allowed to offer athletic scholarships. Each division within the NJCAA runs their own championship tournament.

## Scholarships

One of the great benefits of playing college volleyball is the possibility of scholarships and increased levels of financial aid. But you should know that an athletic scholarship offer from a college or university is a one-year agreement, not a four-year promise. It is a



common misunderstanding to believe that athletic scholarships are four-year contracts because it usually takes four years to complete college. The reality is athletic scholarships are one-year contracts that coaches choose to renew over four years. Recently, though, schools and coaches have been given the opportunity to make scholarships of any length so don't be afraid to negotiate if this is a possibility.

There are two types of athletic scholarships, full and partial. A full scholarship will normally pay for most, if not all, of the expenses of attending university. A partial scholarship obviously will only cover part of the expenses. It is important to get a detailed checklist as to what is covered in the offer.

There is a big difference between a full scholarship (one that covers tuition as well as room and board) and a full-tuition scholarship (one that covers just tuition and not living expenses). This can be a significant cost difference and one that I'm sure you'd like to know about in advance. Do not assume anything when it comes to offers. If you are unsure, ask the coach making the offer to explain it until you fully understand.

## Financial Aid

If a school offers a partial scholarship or a walk-on position, how will you pay the rest of the expenses? The answer is through financial aid. Financial Aid is defined as any outside money that is made available to a student to help fund her education. Financial Aid can come in the form of grants, scholarships, work-study programs or student loans. Most often it is a combination of these elements that fund a student's education.

The Financial Aid process can be quite complicated but here is a summary of the key points.

- Fill out a FAFSA <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>

FAFSA stands for Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Everyone needs to fill out a FAFSA for every year they are in college, whether they are on a full scholarship or they have a walk-on position. The FAFSA application process will start in the spring of your senior year once your parent's taxes are completed. Once the initial application is finished, subsequent years can be estimated. It is the initial step in the Financial Aid process because they can help in many ways with "free" money – or money that does not need to be repaid. The four ways the federal government can help are through grants, scholarships, word-study, and loans. Grants (which are need-based) and scholarships (which are merit-based) do not need to be paid back. Work-study is basically a job on campus which doesn't need to be paid back either since you earned it by working. A loan (or the Federal Stafford Loan) is the last line of defense which DOES need to be repaid but usually at a very low interest rate.

- Apply for private and merit-based scholarships not tied to any particular school



Look for scholarships through the Department of Education's free scholarship search at <https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/scholarships>. Also search for scholarships from your parent's employer, church, local businesses, and other community organizations. These types of scholarships can be used at any school that you choose to attend.

- Contact Financial Aid office at specific colleges to apply for scholarships tied to the school

Once you finally have narrowed down your choices to a few schools, start applying for scholarships that are specifically for use at that school. Again, this is money that will not need to be re-paid.

- Apply for Stafford Student Loan

This is a federal, low-interest loan taken out by the student that needs to be re-paid but can be deferred until after graduation. [www.staffordloan.com](http://www.staffordloan.com)

- Apply for PLUS loan (Parent Loans for Undergraduate Students) and other alternative loans.

This is a supplemental loan taken out by the parent if the cost for school is still greater than your ability to pay.

The FAFSA website is an incredible resource. Here is a link from that website that goes into greater detail about the process as well as providing you with a step-by-step action plan. <https://studentaid.gov/h/complete-aid-process>

If a school offers you a partial scholarship or walk-on position, you will be working through the financial aid process to make ends meet. When this happens, the best defense is to be a student who did very well in school. Academic aid can bring many colleges back into the realm of possibility simply because colleges want good students at their institution. Each school is going to be different in their awarding of academic scholarships so it is important to check with that school's financial aid office. Some schools minimum requirements will be quite high while others will not be quite as stringent.

In summary, financial aid is a tedious process that can reap big benefits. Search high-and-low for scholarships and grants first and supplement the cost disparity with loans if necessary.



## Name, Image, & Likeness

Name, Image, & Likeness (NIL) is a very new way that student-athletes can stay eligible with the NCAA and making money during their college years at the school. The student-athlete would market an item and/or brand for a business and the business would pay the student-athlete directly. NIL rules vary from state to state, as well as school to school. As previously stated, NIL is very new to college athletics, so some schools have a set plan for student-athletes and others do not and are adapting to the changes as time goes on.

## Academic Standards

The NCAA and the NAIA both have a minimum standard needed to be eligible to play as a freshman. For the NAIA, it is a fairly straight-forward process. You must meet at least two of the following criteria:

- 1) A minimum of 18 on the ACT or 860 on the SAT.
- 2) A minimum 2.0 G.P.A. (on a 4.0 scale) and/or
- 3) Be in the top half of your graduating class.

When it comes to the NCAA, it is a bit more complex. There are a minimum number of “core” classes you must pass. For Division I and Division II, you must pass 16 core classes. These core classes consist of classes in English, Math, Physical or Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and other various classes. In order to be a “qualifier” you will need to 1) graduate high school 2) have a minimum G.P.A. of 2.3 in those core classes and 3) have a combined score on your ACT or SAT that matches your GPA on the sliding scale set by the NCAA.

## Clearinghouses

The Clearinghouse’s job is to audit your high school transcripts to make sure you meet the minimum standards for eligibility. The NCAA clearinghouse can be found on the web at [www.eligibilitycenter.org](http://www.eligibilitycenter.org). The NAIA just introduced their own clearinghouse as well and their website is [www.playnaia.org](http://www.playnaia.org). You will need to register for the clearinghouse during your junior year and have your test scores (ACT/SAT) sent to each Eligibility Center. On the standardized tests, the code for the NAIA is (9876) and the code for the NCAA is (9999).

The final piece to the whole puzzle is to have your guidance counselor send your final transcripts after graduation to each Eligibility Center in order to be fully cleared to play



your freshman year. One quick note, DIII institutions do not participate with the Clearinghouse so be sure to check with each individual school for policies concerning eligibility.

Two great resources for academic and eligibility information are:

- The NCAA Guidelines for college-bound athletes can be found at the following link <http://www.ncaa.org/student-athletes>.
- The NAIA counterpart can be found at [http://www.playnaia.org/d/NAIA\\_GuidetoCollegeBoundStudentAthlete.pdf](http://www.playnaia.org/d/NAIA_GuidetoCollegeBoundStudentAthlete.pdf).

## Summary

If one were to distill this recruiting guide to two main points, it would be 1) know yourself and figure out which schools work for you and 2) market yourself hard to the coaches at those schools that meet your criteria. Don't worry about if you can play at that school. Don't worry if the coach probably won't be interested in you. Market yourself anyway.

Most recruits and their families underestimate the work that will be involved. Don't be one of these people. Whenever you start to feel stuck or that things are not moving in your direction, then go back through the process and ultimately – CALL THE PHONE NUMBER OF SOME COLLEGE COACHES. The reality is the majority of recruits are waiting to get recruited. Don't wait! Send another round of emails. Make some phone calls. Leave voicemails if you must. Don't be deterred. *Do something!* Obscurity is your greatest enemy.

The following is a checklist of questions you might want to ask, or at least think about. Use them at your discretion and refer back to them often.

## Recruiting Checklist

### General Questions

1. What is the size of the school?
2. Setting of school? Urban, suburban or rural?
3. Relative safety of the school?
4. The school is a commuter campus or a residential campus?
5. Can freshmen have cars on campus?
6. How difficult is it to find parking on campus?



7. People that attend are mostly...? Local – from the state – from the region – from all over?
8. The school's ethnic diversity is...? White \_\_%, Black \_\_%, Hispanic \_\_%, Asian \_\_%, Other \_\_%
9. How would I get to school? Drive, fly or a combination?
10. Approximate cost of traveling to/from school?
11. Is there an orientation program for freshmen?
12. What type of housing is available? Residence halls, apartments, off-campus?
13. How are roommates decided upon the first year? Does the coach help or not?
14. What types of meal plans are available at the school?
15. What types of social and cultural opportunities are available in the area e.g. plays, concerts, museums, sporting events, dining, shopping, etc...?
16. Where are places of worship and other spiritual opportunities?
17. What recreational opportunities exist near school e.g. beaches, hiking, biking, swimming, etc?
18. What is the recreation center like?
19. What student-led organizations are available to join?
20. How strong are the sororities and greek life on campus?

#### Academic Questions

21. What are the minimum ACT/SAT/GPA requirements for academic aid at the school?
22. Overall academic reputation of school?
23. Reputation of your major within the school?
24. Student/Faculty ratio of school? ...of major?
25. Any special academic qualities of major i.e. highly-specialized major, unique facilities?
26. Graduation rates of general student body? ...of athletes? ...of volleyball program?
27. What is the team GPA?
28. What is the policy in the event there is a conflict between class and practice?
29. Is there a study table for the athletes? ...for the volleyball program?
30. Is there tutoring available on campus?
31. Is there someone to help monitor progress towards a degree?
32. Do athletes get priority in registering for classes in order to eliminate class/practice conflict?
33. Is there a life-skills program available?
34. What types of academic connections are available for internships?
35. What type of post-graduation help is available through the placement office?
36. What is the post-graduate placement success rate?
37. How strong is the alumni network?

#### Volleyball Questions

38. Scholarships available ...full, partial, summer school, fifth-year?



39. What affiliation is the school's athletic department? NCAA DI, DII, DIII – NAIA – Junior College?
40. How does the school compare to the rest of the league in terms of scholarships?
41. How does the school compare to the rest of the league in terms of operating budget?
42. What is the head coach's style of play? ...what is their temperament?
43. What is the experience level of the head coach?
44. What type of relationship does the head coach have with the players?
45. What are the responsibilities of the coaching staff?
46. How long has the coaching staff been together?
47. What is the level of coaching experience of the coaching staff?
48. What is the history of transfers within the program?
49. How competitive is the program in the conference over the past five years?
50. How competitive is the program nationally?
51. Possibilities for post-season play?
52. What is the average jump-touch of the front row right now?
53. Is there an opportunity to play right away?
54. Do the coaches have the ability to develop me?
55. What position are the coaches looking for me to play?
56. Where do I stand on the list of potential recruits?
57. How competitive is the non-conference schedule?
58. What is the personality/atmosphere of the team?
59. How does the roster break down as to class and position?
60. What are the facilities like? Arena, locker room, weight room, video room, player's lounge?
61. What equipment do you get? Shoes, practice gear, uniforms, clothing, travel gear?
62. How much fundraising will I have to do, if any?
63. How much time will be spent fundraising?
64. What volunteering does the program do?
65. How much time will be spent volunteering?
66. What is the training staff and facilities like?
67. How does the athletic insurance work?
68. What access is there to rehabilitation, nutrition, strength & conditioning specialists?
69. What kind of commitment is there from the school in the event of a career ending injury?
70. What kind of media coverage is there? Streaming internet of games, Game-tracker, Live Stats?
71. How does the team travel? Charter plane, commercial flights, coach bus, 15-passenger vans?
72. How does the team dine while on the road? Fast food, pizza, sit-down?
73. Are there pre-game meals for home games?
74. Are there opportunities for special trips in season?
75. Are there opportunities for foreign tours?



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