

Softball Recruiting - The Process

Can I talk to a coach at a tournament? When can I visit a school? What should I put in my video? If you don't know the answers, you're not alone. The college recruiting process can be pretty complicated at times, but here's some key points to remember.

- Of the over 1,100 colleges fielding fast pitch softball teams, only a little over half offer any form of softball scholarships. This means that nearly one-half of girls playing softball in college right now are not receiving athletic-based aid.
- Even at the "fully funded" programs (meaning 12 full scholarships for Division 1), most players on the team will receive only partial scholarships and some may have to make the team as walk-ons.
- Every college-bound player would love to be offered a full athletic scholarship, but the competition for athletic aid is getting tougher each year. In case you are not fortunate enough to get a scholarship, look at all of your financial aid options.

Stuff You Should Know

When Should I Contact Colleges?

- The fall of your junior year, or even earlier. It is never too early to start.

What Should Be In My Skills Video?

- Length is no more than five to 10 minutes of skill work. Include the following basics:
- Hitting off a tee, machine, or pitcher; video from the side, and behind.
- Field your position from the front and side. Show both fielding and throwing.
- Pitchers should show different pitches, and video should be from behind the catcher and a side view.
- No need to get fancy or include game footage-keep it short and simple. Remember coaches have a lot of videos to watch.
- Make sure your graduation year is clearly marked on the video.

Should I Attend College Camps/Clinics?

- YES! This is a great way to be seen and to figure out if you will fit in with a certain team or coaching philosophy. This also provides you with an opportunity to learn and develop as a player. Many colleges have both summer and winter camp/clinics.

What Summer Tournament Should I Attend?

- Keep in mind that college coaches have limited time and budgets to recruit with and thus will try to find tournaments in which they can see many quality teams at once. There are exceptions to this rule, but it is recommended to find the most competitive tournaments that you can. If your team does not compete in the competitive tournaments, all is not lost. You can still be seen, but it is going to take you being more proactive. Camps and videos will help in this process.

The Do's and Don'ts

- Do not approach a college coach while playing in a tournament

A college coach cannot speak to you until after your team has completed play in the tournament, and only after July 1st of your junior year, but they can talk to a parent. However, doing so will count as one of the three allowed face-to-face contacts between you and the coach. Just to be safe, let the coach approach you when he or she is allowed to do so. It's generally not a good idea to try to hand your video or resume to a coach at a tournament. Ask your travel coach to give it to the college coach if you can't email it.

- Do stay on top of your grades!

First and foremost, you are attending college to receive an education, so show us what you can do!

Coaches will look to see if you are working as hard in the classroom as you are on the field. Check with your high school counselor to make sure you are taking the right core courses and that your core GPA is where it needs to be. You can find core courses and GPA requirements at NCAA.org.

NCAA RECRUITING TIMELINE

At the beginning of your ninth grade year, you become a prospective student-athlete. All rules regarding recruiting go into effect at this time. You may visit an institution at your own expense as often as you wish. The athlete can call the coach, but the coach cannot return the phone call, email, instant message, text message or encourage contact of any kind prior to the athlete's junior year.

Junior Year of High School- September 1st- Coaches may send athletes recruiting letters, emails, instant messages, text messages and information about the athletic program. Coaches may not call prospects, however, until after July 1 for Division I and June 15 for Division II.

July 1st After Junior Year- In person, face to face, contacts can begin a Division I college is allowed three total off campus contacts with a prospect during her senior year. Coaches may only call prospects once a week, and these calls include conversations with any family members.

Senior Year of High School-First Day of Classes- On campus official visits may begin. You are limited to five official visits at five different institutions. These are expense-paid visits for the prospect.

National Letter of Intent Signing- Early Signing: Begins the second Wednesday in November of senior year/Late Signing: Begins the second Wednesday in April of senior year.

Junior Year:

Fall: August-December

- Begin planning your college search. Have a family meeting about college. Where are you academically? athletically? financially?
- Get/review a copy of the current NCAA Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete. (www.ncaa.org)
- Talk to your HS counselor; find out if you're on track to be a "qualifier."
- Take the PSAT or PACT and schedule your first SAT and ACT.

Winter/Spring: January-May

- Develop a resume and letter of introduction for college coaches.
- Identify schools that interest you and start sending out packets to coaches at those schools. (This is something you may need to do over the summer and into the fall as well.)
- Make your softball skills video and include it in your introductory packet if possible.
- Take both the SAT and ACT within this period. (Remember to schedule senior fall retakes.)
- Try to visit some college campuses to get an idea of what you like and don't like about them.

Summer: June-August

- Start the NCAA Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse & Amateurism Clearinghouse certification process.
- Play the most competitive travel ball possible.
- Return coaches' questionnaires send out transcripts, track responses to your video, and so on.

Senior Year:

Fall: August-December

- At the end of summer ball, assess where you are in your college search. Continue to send out new letters/resumes and videos (as long as necessary).
- Respond to letters from coaches. Follow up your letters/tapes with phone calls to coaches to find out how interested they are in recruiting you.
- Take the SAT or ACT again. (Never settle for just one score.)
- Visit the colleges that you are seriously considering attending.
- Begin sending out college applications.
- If you haven't started the NCAA Clearinghouse process, do so immediately.

Winter/Spring: January-May

- Continue sending out college applications.
- Apply for financial aid.
- If necessary, continue visiting colleges.
- Make your final college decision!

Summer: June-August

- Complete the NCAA Clearinghouse process if attending a Div I or II school.
- Enjoy your graduation and get ready for college!