



College Recruitment Suggestions, Guidelines and Timelines

No matter how many times you ignore your parents' and coaches incessant reminders of the college process looming on the horizon; ultimately you will not be able to avoid it. Applications. SATs. College essays. Interviews. The list goes on.

Furthermore, what if you intend to be a student-athlete in college? Well, then, you have even more to think about, and the list continues. Soccer resumes. Videotapes. Official visits.

The entire college admissions process seems nothing less than daunting, especially when you incorporate the intricacies of athletic recruitment.

Does the word 'recruitment' make your heart begin to race? If it does, don't worry because you are not alone. Every year, high school seniors, juniors and sophomores across the country confront the college recruitment process with apprehension. How do you begin? When should you get in touch with college coaches? What is an official visit?

First of all, it is important to recognize that there is no specific path you must take. The college recruitment process can be different for every student-athlete. Each school is unique in its own way, and every college coach handles the recruiting process differently. Therefore, your experiences with different coaches and schools will change, and this inconsistency is the very factor that will help you choose the right school for you.

Some high school student-athletes don't need to contemplate the plusses and minuses of different schools because they have already found a match. Heavily recruited student-athletes are players who the coaching staff unquestionably wants as members of the team. Some schools are allowed to offer athletic scholarships to entice recruits. For these fortunate high schoolers, the money from athletic scholarships can drastically reduce the cost of college tuition. As you can see, there are many different paths the recruitment process can take.

Despite the unpredictable nature of college recruitment, there are guidelines that will help prepare you for this exciting, yet somewhat intimidating, process. The following sections suggest when you should begin certain stages of the recruitment process and how to communicate with college coaches. In addition, these sections highlight important things to keep in mind that you may not consider, such as your future after collegiate soccer. In conclusion, there is a section with valuable links to websites devoted to collegiate athletics and the recruitment process. We hope that this information and the following recommendations will ease your nerves (and possibly your parents as well) about the college admissions and soccer recruitment process.

GETTING STARTED

Around the time sophomore or junior soccer season ends, it's inevitable that you will have heard something about playing soccer at the collegiate level. "If you want to play in college, you must have a good one-touch!" your coach may yell at practice. Perhaps an old teammate returns from college and tells you about her soccer program. Or maybe you remember the college coaches who ran you through drills during summer soccer programs. However the tales of college soccer reach you, as a sophomore, college may seem like a millennium away. You are only half way through high school! Nevertheless, as the **college process picks up speed during your junior and senior years**, you will be thankful for having completed some general and simple groundwork.

In addition, keep in mind that college coaches can begin scouting a high school player as early as his or her freshman year. Although college coaches cannot officially call a prospective student-athlete until July 1 after their junior year, they can immediately send letters to express their interest and to provide information about their programs. Basically, it is important to recognize that coaches always have their ears and eyes open, and if they stumble upon a young soccer stalwart, they will not discount them because of their age. College coaches are always looking to develop their programs, so your talents as a sophomore and even as a freshman can give them ideas about the future of their teams.

Essentially, college coaches begin the recruiting process early on, so why shouldn't you? There isn't much you can officially do with respect to communicating with college coaches because of NCAA rules and regulations; however, there is plenty you can do for yourself in terms of getting in touch with your own feelings about college and collegiate soccer. What would you like in a college soccer program? Would you prefer a big school with a large

student body or a small school? Here are some helpful hints for creating a basic foundation for the college admissions and recruitment process.

MAKE A LIST

Draft a tentative list of colleges that you are interested in and that you would like to learn more about. Your list may consist of schools you are familiar with and schools you know absolutely nothing about. Don't discount any school that you are the least bit curious about, and don't worry if your list seems unreasonably long. This is the best way to begin the college process and to be certain that you are not writing off any possibilities too early in the game. Do you know someone in a collegiate soccer program that he/she really likes? Does a school have a particularly good academic department in which you are interested?

Both of these potential schools are good to put on your list, and you will need to find out more about the schools' soccer programs and academic environments. For the elite few, soccer can pay the bills at the professional level, however, if the professional track is not for you, your academic experience in college will provide an important foundation for your chosen profession after college. In addition, it is not uncommon for serious injuries to prematurely end collegiate soccer careers for student-athletes. You must be happy with the school you eventually choose regardless of its collegiate soccer program.

EDUCATE YOURSELF

After you create a broad list of potential schools, you will recognize that you need to learn a lot more about these schools and their collegiate soccer programs. The next step is to educate yourself and conduct your own research. Read everything you can get your hands on pertaining to your schools of interest, collegiate soccer programs and the college recruitment process. In addition, there are many comprehensive and informative college resource books on the market. In fact, your college counseling department at your high school probably has good materials for you to browse. Finally, a great deal of information can be gleaned from school websites, and most collegiate soccer programs have homepages as well.

UNDERSTAND YOUR RESOURCES

Your club coach can be a wealth of information and help for you- Coaches know coaches- it is a small world- Ask for frank and honest feedback from them on your strengths and weakness – Be ready for the feedback- and make sure you tell the coach that you want it straight up! This way you can understand your strengths as they see it and quite possibly the college coach will ask you that. Your high school coach can help as well- however many high school programs do not have the same competitive level as state/premier level programs do. Coaches want to know your strengths- under stiff competition.

NCAA INITIAL-ELIGIBILITY CLEARINGHOUSE

One of the first things you will learn about collegiate sports is that you must register with the NCAA Initial-Eligibility Clearinghouse in order to participate in Division I or Division II athletics in college. To become certified as eligible with the Clearinghouse, you must fill out a standard student form and submit the required documents. This information verifies certain academic requirements and your graduation from high school. Although receiving certification with the NCAA Initial-Eligibility Clearinghouse is not a difficult process, sometimes it is all too easy to forget about this simple task. Start your initial-eligibility clearinghouse registration by the end of your sophomore year or during the beginning of your junior year in high school.

www.ncaaclearinghouse.net

WRITE TO THE COACH

Another valuable way to learn more about colleges and collegiate soccer programs is to open the lines of communication with college coaches. Many collegiate coaches have standard information packets about their soccer programs for high school players and will be happy to send you these materials in the mail. Some coaches have information packets for prospective athletes to fill out and return to the coaching staff. This is a way for the coaches to keep a record of you. *(Keep in mind that collegiate coaches are not allowed to make phone calls to prospective players until July 1 after their junior year in high school, so if you leave a message for a college coach, he cannot return your call. Thus, if you are a sophomore or junior the best way to contact a coach is to write a letter or an email.)* Not only can you request information about the soccer program and the school when you write a letter, you can take advantage of this opportunity to introduce yourself as a prospective collegiate soccer player. This way, you

and the coaching staff are exchanging information and learning about each other in the process. The college admissions and recruitment process is a two-way street. Admissions officials and soccer coaches will be selecting you just as seriously as you are making decisions between schools, therefore it is essential for you to acknowledge your active participation in the process.

The letter you compose should be short and straightforward. The objective of the letter is to request information and to briefly introduce yourself as a prospective student-athlete. You may include a more extensive soccer resume if you have one, however, there will be plenty of time in the future for this as well. (Read the general guidelines about creating a resume below.) Not only do college coaches devote a great deal of time to the recruitment process, they also must manage a team, lead practice and travel to away games. If you keep your initial letters short, college coaches will be grateful and more apt to read your materials carefully.

- Contents of a Letter—what to include:

- Name, high school, current grade level
- Home address, email address, phone number
- High school soccer experience, years of varsity experience, team accomplishments (league champions, conference titles, etc.), personal awards (All-League, MVP, highest scorer, etc.)
- Current club team, recent team accomplishments (tournament champs, division champs, etc.), personal awards
- Academic interests
- Soccer resume (optional)

- **Guidelines for Creating a Resume:**

- Just as if you are applying for a job, begin your resume with basic, personal information—name, address, telephone number, social security number and school.
- Next list your athletic accomplishments and provide information about your past teams, camps, tournaments and other soccer experiences. Don't forget to include athletic accomplishments in other sports as well. Coaches like to see athletic versatility and talent.
- Then list your scholastic accomplishments, include standardized testing scores (ACT, PSAT or SAT) if available, and any extracurricular activities, such as school clubs, in which you are involved.

VISIT THE SCHOOL. VISIT THE COACH

Ultimately, the best way to learn about a college or university is to visit it. While you are on campus you can take advantage of the information sessions and walking tours that most schools offer year-round. It is worthwhile to visit a school during the traditional school year so you can get a feeling for the student body. If you visit a school over the summer, keep in mind that many colleges offer summer programs, therefore the students you see on campus may or may not be full-time students.

In addition, while you are visiting a school, why not schedule a little face-time with the soccer coach? It would be beneficial for you to call the coaching staff before you arrive to make sure that a coach will be on campus and available to meet with you. Meeting with a coach is a great opportunity for you to ask any questions you may have about the school and the soccer program. In addition, after chatting with a coach you will be able to determine whether or not you like him and whether or not you can foresee playing soccer for his program. A conversation between a coach and a prospective player is an important time for the player to assess the coach's temperament and coaching style and for the coach to judge the player's character and devotion to soccer. This meeting is a great time for you to market yourself as a prospective soccer player and to let your personality shine through. A coach puts the same amount of emphasis on a player's character and ability to work well with others as he does on a player's individual soccer skills.

- **Guidelines for the meeting**—what to bring, what to ask, what to say:

- Bring a photocopy of your unofficial high school transcript. The coach will want to see your academic history to ascertain if the school is a good academic fit for you.
- Bring a copy of your athletic resume if you are unsure if the coaching staff already has a copy on record.
- Bring a parent. Although this may seem like an insignificant suggestion, sometimes it is important to remember that your parents want what is best for you. Mom or Dad may think of valuable questions to ask college coaches that you have not yet considered.
- Ask questions. How does the coach run a typical practice? How much does the coach value weight training? Does the school have a lot of school spirit for intercollegiate sports? By asking questions you let coaches know that you have given collegiate soccer a great deal of thought and that you are well prepared for the college process. A student-athlete who asks questions is confident and is determined to play an active role in the recruitment process—Coaches will undoubtedly see these valuable qualities if you ask questions.

- ☐ Most importantly, make sure to establish an open dialogue with a college coach. Let him know what your college admissions process has been like so far and what your thoughts are for the future while you continue to visit other schools and speak with other coaches. By that same right, college coaches should be honest with you. It is to your advantage to know where a coach thinks you will fit into his soccer program in the future.

THE VIDEOTAPE

College coaches are eager to see you in action. Although your list of athletic accomplishments may be stellar, a videotape with footage of you playing soccer is a first-rate way to show coaches what you're all about on the field. Videotapes are not always necessary, but if a coach requests one, you should try to provide it. It does not need to be an elaborate, state-of-the-art video, so you can have a family member videotape you in action and avoid the added costs of hiring a professional. If you and your family do not want to take the responsibility of creating homemade videotapes, ask other members of your team if they are interested in creating recruitment tapes and would like to split the costs of hiring a professional. This is a thrifty idea that will yield quality videotapes.

- Guidelines for Creating Your Own Videotape:

- ☐ The entire tape should be no longer than 15 minutes. College coaches can tell if they like what they see after 10 or 12 minutes, so don't discourage them by providing too much footage. In addition, coaches receive loads of videotapes, and they will be thankful if you keep your video short.
- ☐ College coaches want to see everything you are capable of doing on the field. Although you may be an excellent goal scorer, do not only show footage of you scoring goals. Coaches want to see footage of different skills to get a sense of your versatility on the field—dribbling, defensive positioning, free kicks, throw-ins, sprinting - show it all. Coaches even like to see how you react to mistakes on the field. The best way to give coaches a comprehensive look at you on the field is to choose footage of an actual game. This way coaches can see your skills, athleticism and speed during a real game. Videotape several games so that you will have a variety of segments from which to choose.
- ☐ If you choose to make your own videotape, it may be helpful to use a tripod when filming to prevent jostling and shaking of the camera that will give anyone watching a headache. A tripod will keep the camera stationary and will allow the videotape recorder to focus on the game.
- ☐ If you are a goalie, you may want to include footage of you participating in various goalie drills. Since goalies do not normally see a great amount of action during games, these drills will allow you to continuously demonstrate your skills in goal. Make sure you diversify the drills you include in your video to demonstrate your goalie skills on the ground, in the air, and you're punting and throwing techniques. In addition, you should include some footage of you in goal during a real game. This footage allows college coaches to note your temperament and leadership during actual games.

THE OFFICIAL VISIT

Although you are always welcome to visit college campuses at your own expense, you are limited to only five official visits in which the college pays for part or all of your expenses. Completion of the SAT or ACT and a high school transcript are prerequisites to an official visit, and you may only go on an official visit after the first day of senior classes in high school. Usually an official visit consists of an overnight trip to campus where you will have a member of the soccer team as your host. While you are on campus, you will meet members of the team, learn more about the soccer program and be better acquainted with the coaching staff. In addition, the coaches and the team may bring you to a sporting event and classes so you can get a better feeling for the student body and the academic environment at the school. In fact, you may meet other recruited athletes who are on their official visits as well. An official visit is truly a genuine way to see what it would be like to be a student-athlete in college.

Most importantly, talk to people and take advantage of every opportunity to visit a classroom, a sporting event, a lecture, etc. You will be spending most of your time with players on the team, so you will be able to see what a typical day is like for a collegiate student-athlete. Ask the players on the team what they think about the coach. What do the players think of the coach's coaching style? Academically, you should tell the coaching staff and the players what your interests are. If you like art history, there may be a great art history seminar that you can attend. Perhaps there is a member of the team who is majoring in art history and can talk to you about the department. Talk to the players on the team. If you like the school, these players may just end up being your upperclassmen teammates in college and important figures in your life when you need advice and support. Good Luck!



College Selection/Recruiting Activities Time Line

Pre- High School

- Consider ODP tryouts. This gives you an excellent opportunity to view the competition and areas as a player that you can improve.
- Play soccer year round! – Indoor teams- training- etc.
- Write letters to college coaches that you have an interest in playing or attending school.
- Attend a College game.
- Attend a soccer camp at a college you are interested in attending.

Freshman

- Put together player portfolio (see [NS website template](#))
- Play soccer year round! – Indoor teams- training- etc.
- Review NCAA guidelines to see what college coaches can or can not do for this age group.
- Consider ODP tryouts. This gives you an excellent opportunity to view the competition and areas as a player that you can improve.
- Write letters to at least 3 college coaches and attach player profile
- Visit 2 college campuses and set up appointment to visit soccer coach
- Always visit college website prior to visit to obtain maps and information. It is also a good idea make sure the soccer coach has not changed since you set up your appointment.
- Develop a list a questions to ask college coach. See [NCAA College Bound – Student Athlete](#).
- Put together a notebook to track your visits and store information/brochures on the college and their soccer program.
- Attend college soccer game
- Review your club and high school soccer schedule. Send the schedule to coaches inviting them to your game so they can watch you play.
- Attend a soccer camp at a college you are interested in attending.

Sophomores

- Update your player profile. Ask your coach to consider signing your team up with Soccer in College. This will allow college coaches to view your team accomplishments and player profiles at 1 location.
- Review NCAA guidelines to see what college coaches can or can not do for this age group
- Play soccer year round! – Indoor teams- training- etc.
- Consider ODP tryouts. This gives you an excellent opportunity to view the competition and areas as a player that you can improve.
- Write letters to at least 6 college coaches and attach profile. Send coaches updates each quarter.
- Visit 3 college campuses and set up appointments to visit soccer coach
- Always visit college website prior to the visit to obtain maps and information. It is also a good idea make sure the soccer coach has not changed since you set up your appointment.
- Refine your list of questions to ask college coaches.
- Update your notebook.
- Attend college soccer game
- If there is a college showcase you would like to attend, but your team is not participating, visit the showcase website to see if you can put your name out there as a potential guest player.

- Review your club and high school soccer schedule. Sent the schedule to coaches inviting them to your game so they can watch you play. Coaches are interested in watching how you progress each year and what potential you have to improve at the collegiate level.
- Put together 30 minute DVD of highlights of your soccer games. Make sure to follow the person taping follows the complete play of the ball. This can be done on your own or through a professional. This DVD will be very helpful if you plan to attend an out of state college or if you happen to get injured.
- Interview a former NS Player ([See Alumni Web page](#)) who is currently playing at the collegiate level.
- Attend a soccer camp at a college that you are interested in attending.

Juniors

- Update your player profile. Ask your coach to consider signing the team up with Soccer in College or similar organization. This will allow college coaches to view your team accomplishments and player profiles at 1 location.
- Review NCAA guidelines to see what college coaches can or can not do for this age group.
- Register with [NCAA Eligibility Clearing House](#). See NCCA College Bound – Student Athlete.
- Play soccer year round! – Indoor teams- training- etc.
- Take ACT and/or SAT
- Write letters to at least 9 college coaches and attach profile. Send coaches email updates each quarter.
- Visit 6 college campuses and set up appointments to visit soccer coach
- Always visit college website prior to the visit to obtain maps and information. It is also a good idea make sure the soccer coach has not changed since you set up your appointment.
- Refine your list of questions to ask college coaches.
- Update your notebook.
- Attend college soccer game
- If there is a college showcase you would like to attend, but your team is not participating, visit the showcase website to see if you can put your name out there as a potential guest player.
- Put together 30 minute DVD of highlights of your soccer games if you have done so yet. Make sure to follow the person taping follows the complete play of the ball. This can be done on your own or through a professional. This DVD will be very helpful if you plan to attend an out of state college or if you happen to get injured.
- Interview a former NS Player ([See Alumni Web page](#)) who is currently playing at the collegiate level.
- Attend a soccer camp at a college that you are interested in attending

Seniors

- Update your player profile. Ask your coach to consider signing your team up with Soccer in College or similar service. This will allow college coaches to view your team accomplishments and player profiles at 1 location.
- Review NCAA guidelines to see what college coaches can or can not do for this age group.
- Register with NCAA Eligibility Clearing House, if you have not done so yet. See NCCA College Bound – Student Athlete. You will also need to have you're your HS guidance counselor send in the final form upon graduation to the clearing house.
- Take ACT and/or SAT, if you have not done so yet.
- Write letters to at least 9 college coaches and attach profile. Send coaches updates each quarter.
- Visit 6 or more college campuses and set up appointments to visit soccer coach
- Always visit college website prior to the visit to obtain maps and information. It is also a good idea make sure the soccer coach has not changed since you set up your appointment.
- Refine your list of questions to ask college coaches.
- Interview a former NS Player who is currently playing at the collegiate level.
- If there is a college showcase you would like to attend, but your team is not participating, visit the showcase website to see if you can put your name out there as a potential guest player.

- Put together 30 minute DVD of highlights of your soccer games if you have done so yet. Make sure to follow the person taping follows the complete play of the ball. This can be done on your own or through a professional. This DVD will be very helpful if you plan to attend an out of state college or if you happen to get injured.
- Narrow down your list of colleges, weigh the pros and cons. Make your college decision.

Helpful Websites

www.soccerincollege

www.thesportssource.com

www.soccerinfo.com

www.nscaa.com

www.collegesource.com

www.ncaa.org

www.soccerbuzz.com

www.socceramerica.com

www.michigansoccer.net

www.nextstepmagazine.com/nextstep/college-athletics

You can also Google playing sports in college and it will bring up several sites for you to view.