

Athletic scholarships

Covering a wide range of sports, athletic scholarships in the USA offer talented students financial incentives for representing their university at the varsity level.

Did you know?

- Only certain sports have athletic scholarships available
- You must meet the academic requirements of an athletic association to be eligible
- US athletic recruitment at the university level is highly competitive.

Athletic Associations

University level sports are governed by athletic associations, who set the rules regarding scholarships and athletic recruitment. If a university isn't a member of an athletic association, it is very unlikely that they have sports scholarships available.

Each athletic association will set its own eligibility criteria for international students. Links to their pages are available on our website, which will include their associations' guides.

- **National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)** – the largest association with over 1,000 member institutions, the NCAA distributes the most funding and is highly competitive
- **National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA)** – the NAIA has around 250 member institutions
- **National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA)** – the NJCAA covers two-year community colleges

Recruitment process

Obtaining a sports scholarship will take work on your part. Students in the USA can start the process as young as 14 years old. International students don't have to begin quite so early but the sooner you start and the more time you put in, the more likely you are to achieve your goal.

Many students begin the process the summer after Year 11. You can contact coaches as early as Year 10 or 11 but be aware that coaches can only begin recruiting at certain times of the year and within a certain academic year.

You can follow a do-it-yourself route or use a fee-paying sports scholarship agency. We have a list of resources available on our website to help you with the process.

Flip the page to find a helpful student athlete checklist!

Student athlete checklist

- **Take a talent assessment to determine which division(s) or level you are.**
<https://www.ncsasports.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/SportsSpecificRecruitingGuide1.pdf>
- **Register with the NCAA eligibility center or NAIA** – they will send you information on how to become eligible, tips, etc.
- **Create a sports-specific CV including your statistics and achievements** – this may include your best times or scores, tournament results, people you have beat (if names would be familiar to US coaches).
- **Ask your coach for a reference letter, highlighting your skills and abilities**
- **Create a video highlight reel** – including highlights of games or drills, your general skills, etc. This may only be needed for non-quantifiable sports.
- **Write a cover letter or email template** – to send to coaches to express interest in their school and team. Send this alongside your CV and stats/videos.
- **Register, revise and sit the SAT or ACT** – you can have your scores sent electronically to NCAA (code: 9999) and NAIA clearance (code: 9876)
- **Register for eligibility clearance for the NCAA/NAIA** – have transcripts and exam results sent or uploaded from your school. Visit their websites for complete guides.
- **Research schools and contact coaches** – reach out to at least 40 coaches.
 - You can use our pages on “choosing” for advice on researching universities. There are thousands offering sports, so look at where you will be accepted academically.
 - Create a spreadsheet to track who you have contacted and determine where to apply based on results.
- **Respond to coaches promptly and find further information** – Ask relevant questions to gather further details ie. Do you offer full or partial scholarships? What expectations do you have for training and conditioning? Is medical insurance provided by the college?
 - You can find a list of questions to ask both coaches and admissions staff at www.ncaa.org/student-athletes/future/choosing-college
- **Complete university applications** – The sports recruitment and association’s eligibility clearance run separate to admission to the university where you are recruited.
- **Be mindful of National Letter of Intent deadlines and regulations** – you can find more information at www.nationalletter.org

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