



# HOW TO PLAY THE RECRUITING GAME

We hope everyone will find this material useful, at least informative in your recruiting efforts.

Remember, recruiting is hard work for everyone, but if you can stay on top of your recruiting time table and schedule, and work hard to contact the schools you are interested in, the process should be very rewarding.

## College Recruiting Topics:

- How to Win at Recruiting
- "The Windows of Opportunity"
- Work from the Correct Recruiting "Premise!"
- A Winning Attitude is Key to Being Recruited!
- Summer Scouting
- The College Checklist:
  - \* Initial-Eligibility Clearinghouse
  - \* General Tips on Recruiting
  - \* Videotaping Your Softball Skills
  - \* The Ending Junior, Beginning Senior Year Checklist
  
- NCAA Division I & Division II Rules to Follow
- What To Ask During Recruitment Visits
- In Conclusion...

## How to Win at Recruiting

- With each passing recruiting year, we've all see proof of softball's growth at the youth level. More high school and travel teams around the country are becoming more competitive, and there's a definite increase in the number of student-athletes who are dreaming of playing softball in college. Softball talent, is just like softball teams -- college to youth ball -- tends to fall into a pyramid shape; and don't ever expect this to change. Just as there will always be more average players than there will be the next Lisa Fernandez, Cat Osterman or Natasha Watley, there will always be fewer college teams at the very top -- and a lot more in the middle and towards the bottom of this pyramid.

Today the level of competitiveness of most Division I college teams is very, very good. This is due to better coaching, better training, better technology, more experienced players, and a bigger and better pool of talent to draw from. Players who ten years ago might have walked into many Division I teams and been guaranteed a spot, are now scrambling to get themselves recruited. Because of the pyramid structure of college softball, there will be far fewer spots open at top 10 schools and far more players wanting to go to those schools. Remember, the bigger the talent pool, the more the coaches have to pick from and can afford to be choosier which athletes they want to recruit.

It is very important to identify your athlete's "target zone" early in the recruiting process. In the "old" days, a player could write five or ten schools, and if those schools weren't interested, they could then write another five or ten, gradually working their way down the list until they found schools where they would be "impact" players. The key to being recruited is to find the school where you will make a difference. Too many families wait too long to do begin the process of finding the "target zone".

We are not to discouraging players by telling them they are unlikely to be recruited by a Florida State or Washington or Cal State or UCLA. It's perfectly fine to contact your "dream" schools. Just do it early in your college search, while at the same time also write twenty or thirty other schools covering a broad spectrum from small and mid-level Division I schools, Division II, and Division III programs. It's a lot easier to hear that a Top 10 Division I team isn't interested in recruiting you, if at the same time you are hearing that a mid-level Division I or outstanding Division II, and Division III school that has a spot just for you.

As you're sitting around waiting for a coach to call you, think of these numbers. Every fall, roughly 3,500 to 4,000 young women will enter four-year colleges as new recruits destined for the softball team. Of this total number, 80% will go to play for Division II, and Division III and NAIA college teams, and 90% will be going to schools that are located east of the state of Colorado! Of this total number, only about 50% will get any softball-based aid. (Players may get lots of other kinds of financial aid, but a lot of students will not be signing a National Letter of Intent.) And, finally, of the above total number only about 75 to 100 athletes will go to Top 20 Division I teams. (This means only three to four kids a year will go to an Arizona or a Texas.)

Too many parents waste time insisting that their player is in the elite "Blue Chip" pool of recruits, when in reality she's in the much, much larger pool of "very good" athletes. Because of this illusion, these families take too long to realize that their daughter may have to accept a Division II scholarship, or an NAIA talent award, or a Division III financial aid package if she really wants to play softball in college. **We never recommend that a player go to a college just to play softball.** This is always a big mistake. All athletes are students first. We encourage athletes to expand their horizons and consider colleges they might not have never heard about or colleges that are a little farther away from home than they originally desired to get a great education. College coaches "DO" want the best talent they can get and coaches will take a long hard look at the player who most wants to play and who really wants to be part of their program. The more open an athlete is to this concept, the greater are her chances are of being some coach's "dream" recruit.

The recruiting game is a lot like a game of musical chairs. There are always too many players competing for too few seats. If the music starts to slow down, you had better grab the first open chair. If you don't, you may find you are out of the game all together!

[Back to Topics List](#)

**"The Windows of Opportunity"** - Some families are very "gung ho," when it comes to recruiting... wanting to write colleges when their player is a freshman or sophomore, while others are more laid back and are pretty sure their athlete will just be discovered, recruited and signed. In any case, the worse thing parents and players can do is wait until her senior year before panicking and rushing to send out letters and tapes.

Is there a right answer to the question of when to start the college search? Technically, there isn't. You can get lots of different input depending whom you talk to.

While it's true that a few college programs may spot young players they want to watch, there's a catch there. They want to identify the next phenom. If they can find that player when she's young and begin to interest her in their school, they will. But most athletes will not be the "greatest athlete of their generation." And, we all know of players who as sophomores are solid (but nothing special), but who become outstanding recruits by their senior year.

It's imperative for parents to remember that NCAA college coaches are required to follow all NCAA recruiting guidelines. They are not supposed to write players for recruiting purposes until the start of the junior year, and even then, they cannot talk to players in person about recruiting until July 1st prior to their senior year of high school! Yes, coaches can send out basic questionnaires to sophomores. But that's it. They're not supposed to be telling freshmen and sophomores that they want to recruit them!

Not all college coaches are created equal when it comes to recruiting. Some coaches have great support staffs who can be churning out letters on a weekly basis to players. Others lumber along like dinosaurs struggling to respond to letters and tapes that came in six months ago! Some schools have already identified their rising senior prospects by early summer, have contacted them and set up visits by early September, and have those players signed by November. But other colleges may aim to sign one player in the fall and the rest in the spring; while some sign none in the fall, waiting until after the early signing to get serious. Even those coaches who want to be done by in the fall can often find themselves in March, April, May or June still looking for recruits. Sounds like fun doesn't it!

**Contact - MIDDLE TO END OF THE SOPHOMORE YEAR:** If your athlete is playing on an 18U team that goes to Colorado in the summer, ASA Nationals or other major tournaments, you have the option of sending out emails or letters to coaches with the player's name; home address; team name; jersey number; graduation year; position; and which tournaments she'll be at. If you do, be sure to include game schedules and times, fields, etc. Parents: Read the NCAA rule book and memorize the rules on contact. We see parents breaking these rules right and left -- sometimes coaches too -- but you may not realize your daughter's eligibility to play could be jeopardized by what you consider a harmless conversation about a college's football team.

**START OF THE JUNIOR YEAR:** This is a very important "window of opportunity" for your player. If your player is on an 18U team or Gold team that goes to major fall exposure tournaments that coaches attend, you SHOULD BE sending out the emails and letters. **Start thinking about shooting your skills video tape** (we recommend shooting your video during the fall season or just after your fall season is completed). Your player should also begin setting her resume up on the computer and working on a letter of introduction. Also look at scheduling the PSAT over the upcoming school year to get her prepared for taking the real test! Familiarize yourself with the NCAA Clearinghouse and get the ball rolling.

**MIDDLE OF THE JUNIOR YEAR:** Have your player schedule the SAT and ACT and begin to identify schools she'd like to write to. Encourage her to continue exploring different schools, and look for things that interest her. Remember, the education is what "really matters"... pay attention to making good grades and work hard to maintain a good GPA. **Again, if you haven't started, look at shooting your skills video tape.** This is a great time to begin organizing any materials the schools may be sending. Be sure to complete any questionnaires as quickly as possible as coaches are interested in learning about you.

**END OF THE JUNIOR YEAR:** Late May to late July is possibly the best "recruiting window of opportunity." This is also when they should begin putting together packets to send to college coaches. They should include the video or you can wait until it's requested. Definitely let coaches know where they'll be playing over the summer. As soon as school ends, you should have already completed the NCAA Clearinghouse process, having the school send the IEC a 6th semester transcript.

**START OF THE SENIOR YEAR:** Families need to ensure their player is on track, and they keep the process moving forward. If they haven't heard back from the schools initially contacted, follow-up phone calls may be in order--particularly if they have sent a video. Seniors need to remember that no coach will give them any realistic feedback on their chances of making a college team without either having seen the tape or seen the player compete in person. Seniors need to sort colleges into three categories: The "Thanks, but no thanks" category; the "We don't know yet" category; and the "YES, we're definitely interested and would like to talk to you, bring you in for a visit, have you apply to the school, etc." category.

As the senior year progresses, the player's goal should be to constantly empty the "NO" category, to move the schools in the "MAYBE" category into either the "NO" or "YES" categories, and to find out which schools in the "YES" category may be a good match for her. If families take advantage of these "windows of opportunity," they are more likely to be on track throughout the process, while at the same time avoiding having to write schools three or four times to get a response. The college search tends to be more like a marathon than a sprint for most kids and parents. The key to winning is stamina, persistence and the ability to pace yourself. We recommend that you start early. You may have to repeat, and repeat, and repeat your efforts. Start too late, and you may miss the boat completely at a lot of schools!

[Back to Topics List](#)

**Work from the Correct Recruiting "Premise!"** - When it comes to recruiting, many families often make the mistake of assuming certain things are true. Then when their college search gets stalled or derailed, they get confused and upset. People assume or take for granted that because they think something should be a certain way, it will be. Unfortunately, that's all too often not the case. You might be lucky and find this out early enough to change your perspective. Or you might not accept it out until it's too late. One of our goals as a select fastpitch organization is to help families approach the college search from the perspective that is most likely to get them the results they want. And that means accepting right from the beginning that this process is most likely to be unfair.

While it may be true that their athlete is very talented, has terrific competitive experience, is a good student and a wonderful human being... none of those things guarantees recruitment. These wonderful qualities may factor into her recruitment, but unfortunately, they don't guarantee that things will work out fairly or logically. The simple truth is that there are some important factors in the recruiting equation that parents can control... and some that they can't. If you understand this and work your tail off to stay on top of the things you can control, then you may be able to lessen the effect of those things you can't control.

For example: Your athlete can control her grades (at least to the extent that she gets the best grades she's capable of getting.) The athlete can determine how hard she works to make the most of her athletic ability -- she can choose to go hang out with her friends rather than putting in extra time at the batting cages or on the mound. She can choose to play the toughest competitive schedule, and she can decide how much she hustles. To some extent, the athlete may be able to control how she performs under pressure; parents or coaches may be able to help by encouraging the practice and drills that build confidence and help her succeed. But if she's only successful when no one is watching or when she's playing against weaker competition, and can't produce when it counts -- e.g., when coaches are there to watch her -- fair or not, she may have trouble convincing those coaches that she can play for them. Families can control how well they market their player, and they can focus on the types of programs where she's most likely to be successful because these are the teams that are most likely to recruit her.

Parents can moan and groan until they're blue in the face but it's not going to change the mind of a coach who just doesn't see what they see when looking at this athlete. Parents can't control whether or not college coaches make recruiting mistakes. But they can help their college-bound player avoid making college search mistake if they work from the correct premise. Assume that this process may not be fair, that it may be confusing and that you're not going to change the process. All you can change is your approach to it. But changing your attitude may give your athlete an edge that players who are more experienced or even more talented may lack!

[Back to Topics List](#)

**A Winning Attitude is Key to Being Recruited!** - Many athletes and their parents will use the player's performance in game situations as an indicator of her recruitability. If she goes three for four and makes a great diving play on a ball, they're convinced all college coaches will want to recruit her. If she goes "0" for the day, and boots a couple of balls, they're sure no coach will even look at her. The player's (and her parents') attitude towards the game is often tied to her performance. If she's hitting, fielding or pitching really well, she smiles, she's happy and her parents are ecstatic. If she has an off day, reactions can range from simply "getting down on herself" to "rage and tantrums". We have also seen where a player is doing very well in a game, but other team members are struggling and not "showing" as well as they would like. In this situation, parents (and occasionally the player herself) may get upset, talk about finding another team... complain about the other players or coaches... and create a very unhealthy environment. If you asked the parents why they were acting this way, they would tell you that the team's performance was hurting their player's chances for success. Performance is important... no one would argue that a player who can't hit or field will probably not make it at the college level. And it's equally true that college coaches look for a 'clutch performance' when scouting a prospect, but just as there are many different levels of collegiate competition and many different types of college coaches, there are many levels of success among players and their attitudes.

The "blue-chip" player, the girl in the top 1% of all players, will probably -- even on a bad day -- look better than a very average player does on a good day. But college coaches know that even top athletes have "off" days now and then. When scouting, how much attention a coach pays to any given athlete may also depend a lot on whether or not the coach has a context for that player. In other words, when a coach just randomly stops at a field for five minutes to watch a team he or she doesn't know, if your player is having a really bad game, the coach will probably move on and not pay her any more attention. However, if the coach had gotten a letter from her, seen her video and liked it, and knew your player was very interested in his or her college, that coach might still take the time to watch more than one inning. He or she might even come back for another game to see if this poor performance was the result of an 'off day.' It's also good to remember that college coaches don't just look at mechanics or skill level when recruiting athletes. Although these things are very important, most coaches also look closely at a player's attitude, work ethic, sportsmanship, and other qualities that can't be measured by 'statistics.' It's completely normal for young adults to get discouraged, depressed or frustrated when they don't perform up to someone's expectations -- whether it be their own, their parents' or their coaches'.

Learning to deal with frustration is as much a part of being a successful competitor as is learning to hit a change-up or throw a curve. Softball is a team sport and failure is just sometimes part of the game. When recruiting, many college coaches will specifically try to look at an athlete's performance in challenging situations; and they will definitely be interested in how she copes with adversity.

When the umpire has an inconsistent strike zone, or the team isn't playing up to its potential, coaches want to know how the individual reacts. Does she throw her bat and helmet, stomp around angrily, sit and sulk on the bench, or in other ways fail to adjust to the situation? Or does she rise to the occasion, try to keep her teammate spirits up, try to perform to her best? Loving the game and being competitive enough to hustle even when it's ninety degrees and you're losing will tell a college coach a lot about how you will cope with the demands of college softball. In between innings if you drag out to your position at shortstop and just lob balls to the first baseman, laughing when you miss a ball, this may give a college coach the impression you lack intensity or that you can't stay focused. If you sit in the dugout and sulk when the coach pulls you for a pinch hitter or when the coach asks you to bunt, you pop up because you really want to hit away, this may tell a college coach you're not a team player and you're only interested in your own performance. Remember, you never know when a college coach or a scout is watching you.

From the time you show up at a tournament or game, you should be performing -- in every sense of the word -- to the best of your abilities. Whether you're just hitting soft-toss during pre-game warm-ups or making a leaping catch to save the game, coaches may be watching. When you're carrying gear after the game or sitting on the bench keeping stats for your coach, someone may be watching. And a decision to recruit or not recruit you could be based on how you handle yourself in these situations.

Finally, parents should keep in mind that the same cautions apply to you. While coaches are scouting your player, they may also be scouting you. Although it seems farfetched, there have been situations where coaches have decided not to recruit a good athlete simply because they watched her parents "act out" in the stands. The coaches saw the parents and realized the athlete would probably not fit in with their team -- or at least her parents wouldn't! It may be difficult for some parents to understand, but the reality is when your athlete joins that college team, you have to say good-bye. Even if you've coached her for ten years, you will not have any input once she's in college. Where she plays, when she plays, what pitches she throws, whether she hits -- these are all decisions the college coach will make without your help. And whether or not you like what the coach is doing, it probably won't matter a bit.

As a family, it's a good idea to talk about the emotional aspects of softball. Look at how you all handle pressure and try to gain some perspective. The more positive you can be during the tough games, the more likely you are to leave a positive impression on a coach! If this sounds easy, believe us -- it is once you get the hang of it!

[Back to Topics List](#)

**Summer Scouting** - June and July for the select ball player is on the road, often at major exposure tournaments in Colorado. This can be an exhilarating (and scary) time for players, particularly those players who will start their senior year in the fall. We'd like to mention or remind you of some of these things that might help keep you focused, motivated and on the right track during your college search.

### **Observations from/about College Coaches**

College Coaches all go to big tournaments with the best teams in attendance. If you're not on that list, it will be very hard to get noticed unless you're hitting the ball to the fence on a regular basis -- and when the coaches are watching. (Sorry, but that's just the way it is.) Coaches prefer that parents not approach or talk to them unless they (the coaches) have specifically requested a contact. (Parents: read the NCAA rule book and memorize the rules on contact. We see parents breaking these rules right and left -- sometimes coaches too -- but you may not realize your daughter's eligibility to play could be jeopardized by what you consider a harmless conversation about a college's football team.)

Coaches really need to know accurate grade point averages -- NCAA "core and cumulative" -- and SAT or ACT scores. Almost all coaches are looking for strong, consistent hitters. Most will tell you they'd rather work to develop a player's fielding skills than have to teach her how to hit. Unless you're incredibly lucky or amazingly athletic, becoming a good hitter is a matter of learning the right mechanics (teaching your muscles what to do), developing a keen eye and teaching yourself very good discipline at the plate... and then practicing to get even better! Again, it may not be fair, but clutch hitting is what gets coaches' attention (if you're not a pitcher)!

When coaches are scouting, it's virtually impossible to differentiate between the travel ball player who sees college softball as a beginning -- e.g., when she gets there, she'll work even harder, become an even better player, etc. -- and the travel ball player who sees college ball as an ending -- e.g., she's been doing this summer ball stuff to get a college scholarship or to get into college. As far as she's concerned, once she's there, she gets to level out and have a good time. She doesn't have to get any better. But if you ask coaches, they will all tell you it's the first type of player they really want. There's way too many kids out there for coaches to see all of you. Don't assume because they're watching your game that they're there to see you. You need to show them you're motivated enough to put some effort into your college search!

By the end of a big exposure tournament, coaches are bleary-eyed and exhausted. And we can guarantee you they won't remember everyone they've seen. If you want them to remember you, follow up after the tournaments with a call or email to find out if they even saw you play... and to ask where they are with recruiting.

## Observations for/about Players

Sometimes it just happens, you're just having a bad day. But a rotten attitude turns coaches off faster than anything else. If you don't want to be playing softball, don't play. (Mom and Dad will get over it -- eventually). Occasional frustration is natural and understandable. But coaches want to see if you deal with adversity in a positive or negative way. If you're struggling, don't throw your bat or helmet. Go ask for help and figure out what to do to fix the problem. If you're not performing well at the moment, focus externally and support your teammates instead of sulking and feeling sorry for yourself.

Weight training and running will be part of your college experience if you play softball. Don't wait until you get to college to figure this out. Start now. You'll feel better, look better, perform better and have more stamina. And you'll be way ahead of the other freshmen starting school with you!

College coaches really prefer to hear from you. They're not recruiting your mom or your dad or your club coach. No matter how scary it is, if you're not motivated enough to call coaches, talk to them, etc., they may figure you're really not that interested in playing college softball for them.

Don't ever just take the SAT or ACT once -- unless you score a 1600 or 36 out of the gate. No matter how unpleasant it is, work to raise your scores. There's a lot more academic money than athletic money available and coaches look for kids with high test scores.

Coaches will be recruiting your daughter. If she doesn't want it, you can't make it appear that she does. Ask her on a regular basis if she's sure that playing in college is what she's wants. If it is, help her learn how to reach that goal. If it's not, let her do something she enjoys -- and you can go get a life!

Learn the recruiting rules. Don't ever approach coaches to chat about their teams or about your player. Don't jeopardize your player's eligibility and then use the excuse, 'Well, I didn't know.'

Find out what your daughter or player's grades really are. Learn the difference between an NCAA "core GPA", a "semester GPA" and a "cumulative GPA". This is critical information for many college coaches.

Always support your player in a positive way. No matter how frustrating it is for you, it's ten times more frustrating for her. Do you think she wants to be striking out???? Don't you think she'd prefer to be hitting line drives to the fence or throwing an incredible rise ball??? Your negative comments simply make things worse. They never make things better. If your player is struggling, be helpful, not hurtful. Help her determine whether her problems are mechanical or mental. If they're mechanical, then get some expert advice on how to fix them; and remember, it takes a lot of repetitions to change muscle memory. If she's in a mental slump, help her discover ways to build self-confidence, to develop discipline. Ten years from now, chances are the quality of your relationship with your daughter will be greatly improved if you leave your ego out of it and help your player learn the positive lessons softball has to teach... not the negative ones.

[Back to Topics List](#)



# The College Checklist

- Whether you are a freshman or a senior, start thinking about college NOW. The preparation you do today, will make your decision-making process easier when you being recruited. Research, research, research... discover what your interests are, and what schools will best help you achieve your goals for the future. Below are some standard questions and checklists which will help you prepare for your recruiting opportunities:

## Initial-Eligibility Clearinghouse

- 1. Why do I need to register and be certified??** If you intend to participate in Division I or II athletics as a freshman in college, you must be registered with and be certified as eligible by the NCAA Initial-Eligibility Clearinghouse. Please note that initial-eligibility certification pertains only to whether you meet the NCAA requirements for participation in Division I athletics and has no bearing on your admission to a particular Division I or II institution.
- 2. When should I register??** You should register with the clearinghouse whenever you decide you would like to participate in athletics as a college freshman. It's generally best to register anytime before participation. If you register late you may face delays that will prevent you from practicing and competing.
- 3. How do I register??** You will need to obtain registration materials from your high-school guidance counselor. These materials include a student-release form and a red brochure titled, "Making Sure You Are Eligible to Participate in College Sports". Fill out the student-release form completely and mail the top (white) copy of the form to the clearinghouse along with \$18 fee. Give the pink and yellow copies of the student-release form to your high school to forward your transcript to the clearinghouse. The high school will keep the pink cop of the form for its files.

## The National Collegiate Athletic Association

6201 College Boulevard  
Overland Park, Kansas 66211-2422  
913-339-1906

- 4. What if I have attended more than one high school??** If you have attended multiple high schools since ninth grade, each school will need to send your official transcripts to the clearinghouse. You should give the pink and yellow copies of the student-release form to the counselor at the high school from which you will be graduating. You also will need to make copies of this form and send them to the counselors at the other schools that you have attended.
- 5. Are standardized test scores required??** Qualifying test scores are required for participation at both Division I and II colleges. If you intend to participate at either a Division I or II school, the test scores may be taken from you official high-school transcript.

## General Tips on Recruiting

- 1. Develop a resume just as you would if you were looking for a job.** Although it's never too late, the ideal time to start putting this together is the summer before your junior year. Begin with the basics - name, address, telephone number, and school. Then list your athletic and scholastic accomplishments, plus any honors you've received to date. Add any extracurricular activities in which you've participated at this point.
- 2. Do your research!** Check the libraries for college reference books, then look to see which schools offer a softball program and curriculum that best suits your needs.
- 3. Write interest letters to coaches to find the coaches names, call the schools' athletic departments.** If you can't get a particular name, address the coach by title:

Head Softball Coach  
Athletic Department  
University Name  
City Name,  
State and Zip

Note in each letter that you're interested in the schools athletic and academic program and fill the coach in on your background. Enclose your resume and, if possible, a letter of recommendation from a high school or summer team coach. You'll most likely get a letter back with a questionnaire to fill out.

- 4. Make a skills tape.** Have a parent or coach videotape you in action. It does not have to be fancy, or done by a professional

## Videotaping Your Softball Skills

College Coaches want to see everything you are capable of doing. If you play several positions, show footage of those different skills. Keep in mind though that these colleges receive "hundreds" of videotapes each season and simply don't have time to view excess and unneeded footage. Keep it simple, keep moving. We also strongly recommend that you do not include any High School or Travel ball video "unless" a coach specifically asks to see it... even then, put that on a separate tape other than on your skills video.

### Before You Shoot Your Video

- 1. Plan ahead...** Don't decide to "just shoot" your video one weekend because it's nice outside. Avoid the stress of a wasted day and plan ahead. Take the time to write out a script of those skills you want to show. Plan what angles to shoot and what looks best. Take the time to write an introduction and a closing to your tape... ("Hi, my names is... I play for... I will graduate..." and "Thank you for watching my tape... I'll look forward to see you next summer at...") Practice this short speech before you video tape it. Plan "what" you are going to do, and "how" you're going to do it.
- 2. Be organized...** Look at dates, times and schedules for when you "can" shoot. If a coach is going to help you out, make sure that you can accommodate their schedule. If another player is involved, same thing!!! Know your schedule and try and stick to it. Let those people who will be helping you know how long your video shooting will take and what dates will work for everyone. Allow for the weather... rescheduling is the norm.
- 3. Be prepared...** Make sure you have everything you need. Make sure everyone else has what they need too. Think of every possible that you may "need" and pack it up... there's nothing is worse than saying "oops, sorry - we're out of tape." or, "I forgot to bring a ball..."
- 4. Have fun...** The more relaxed everyone is, the better things will turn out. Don't worry about being "perfect" on every swing or throw... that's why editing exists! If you're enjoying yourself, that will come across in your video and make the right impression.

### A Few Suggestions As To What Coaches Will Want To See:

**HITTING:** View from beyond opposite batters box, facing the batter as they are in their stance, close view. Full swings in this segment, if you have full swings from both right and left side, please show both.

**BUNTING:** Sac Bunts: View from pitching circle, left and right sides, if applicable. Bunt for Hit: View from pitching circle, left and right sides, if applicable. Drag Bunt: View from pitching circle, left and right sides, if applicable. Slap Bunt: View from beyond opposite batters box, left and right side, if applicable.

**THROWING AND CATCHING:** (All Positions) Fielding ground balls, some directly at you, some to your right and left. Balls to your right and left should be approximately 15 to 20 feet each way. Show the throw to a base. (Note) Always have an angle to show the throw. DO NOT follow the ball with the camera.

**CATCHERS:** (Full Equipment) Block ball in dirt, some right at you, some to show lateral movement. Field bunts and throw to all bases. Pickoff, show throws to 1st and 3rd base. Steals, show throw to 2nd and 3rd base, with the fielder on the move to cover the base.

**CORNERS:** Field bunts, throw to 1st, 2nd and 3rd bases. At 1st base, taking throws in the dirt. At 3rd base, taking throws from the outfield, making a tag.

**MIDDLE INFIELDBERS:** Double play, pivot and footwork. Double play, feeds. Shortstop, covering second on a steal. Second, covering first on a bunt. Fly balls overhead, Texas Leaguer.

**OUTFIELDERS:** Fielding fly balls, some directly at you, some to your right, left and forward. Show the throw to 2B, 3B and home.

**PITCHERS:** Two Angles: From behind pitcher. From side of the catcher. Show 5 to 6 of each pitch you have from each angle. Fielding grounders and bunts, throwing to all bases.

**BASE RUNNING:** Home to first, after you swing. Home to home, after you swing.

**SLIDING:** Stealing 2nd or 3rd: Show different slides you are capable of doing. Figure four, slide by and head first.

**HOW LONG?** The order you perform the skills makes no difference. The entire tape should only be approximately 4 TO 5 minutes.

### **The Ending Sophomore, Beginning Junior Year Checklist:**

1. Involve your parents in your decision-making process.
2. Decide how close you want to be to your home and parents.
3. Decide on what level (Division I, II, III) you can or want to compete at in college.
4. Ask your high school and summer league coaches for an evaluation of your ability.
5. Write introductory letters to college softball coaches.
6. Personalize each letter. (College coaches are really turned off by form letters)
7. Return all softball questionnaires sent by college coaches as soon as possible. Delays indicates lack of interest.
8. Make a softball skills videotape. (Many college coaches will request a videotape of your softball skills)
9. Send high school and summer softball schedules to college coaches.
10. Be conscious of your high school grades, the level of courses you take, the correct number of courses and your rank in your class. Your school counselor will be able to get this for you.
11. Schedule yourself to take the SAT's. Have your PSAT scores available.
12. Decide on which colleges have your areas of study or interest.
13. Be aware of "college nights" in your area.
14. Start your initial-eligibility clearinghouse:

The National Collegiate Athletic Association  
6201 College Boulevard  
Overland Park, Kansas 66211-2422  
913-339-1906

### **The Ending Junior, Beginning Senior Year Checklist:**

1. Follow up on your clearinghouse eligibility.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association  
6201 College Boulevard  
Overland Park, Kansas 66211-2422  
913-339-1906

2. Take or retake your SAT or ACT to improve your score.
3. Start collecting and filling out college applications. Be aware of deadlines. Complete and mail applications early.
4. Let coaches know you have applied. Follow up your contact with college coaches with a phone call or note.
5. Try and narrow your choice of colleges to five or six. Decide on what colleges to visit (remember - you may only make five official "paid" visits)
6. Do not make a decision unless you have visited the campus and met the coach and players.

## NCAA Division I & Division II Rules to Follow: -

1. Coaches may not contact prospective recruits before Sept. 1st of the players' junior year in high school. You can call or write but they cannot call you or send any promotional softball material about their program.
2. Coaches may not contact you by phone or in person before July 1st after your junior year.
3. Coaches may not talk to senior players at tournaments until their team has been eliminated. They can talk to a family member, which will constitute an official contact.
4. Coaches may only call prospective student athletes once a week. (You may call them as often as you like.)
5. Coaches can only have 3 in person official contacts with a player. (Parents talking to a coach is a contact.)
6. A player can only have 5 official visits. (You must be in your senior year to take an official visit.)
7. Early signing period is during the 2nd & 3rd week of November of your senior year; the next signing period is in April of your senior year.

Please remember it's great to receive letters from schools and coaches, but most schools send out hundreds of letters to athletes. This is only the first step in the recruiting process. So don't slow down on marketing yourself because you are receiving some letters, no matter how interested the coach seems. They are sending the same letter out to a lot of other athletes. There are some athletes that will receive 50 to 100+ letters from different colleges, and some schools do heavy recruiting knowing they don't have enough scholarship money to go around. Most programs will only be recruiting 3 to 4 players a year.

[Back to Topics List](#)

# What To Ask During Recruitment Visits

## A Few Softball Questions:

- 1. What positions will I play on your team??** It's not always obvious. Most coaches want to be flexible so that you are not disappointed.
- 2. Describe the other players competing at the same position.** If there is a former high-school all-American at that position, you may want to take that into consideration. This will give you clues as to what year you might be a starter.
- 3. What is the "redshirt" policy??** Find out how common it is to redshirt and how that will affect graduation. Does the school redshirt you if you are injured?
- 4. What are the physical requirements each year??** Philosophies of strength and conditioning vary by institution. You may be required to maintain a certain weight.
- 5. How would you best describe your coaching style??** Every coach has a particular style that involves different motivational techniques and discipline. You need to know if a coach's teaching style does not match your learning style.
- 6. What is the game plan?** For team sports, find out what style of offense and defense is employed.
- 7. When does the head coach's contract end??** Don't make any assumptions about how long a coach will be at a school. If the coach is losing and the contract ends in two years, you may have a new coach.
- 8. Describe the preferred, invited, and uninvited walk-on situation.** How many make it, compete and earn a scholarship? Different teams treat walk-ons differently.

## A Few Academic Questions:

- 1. How good is the department in my major??** Smaller colleges can have very highly rated departments. A team's reputation is only one variable to consider. Your degree is what really matters!
- 2. What percentage of players on scholarship graduate in 4 years??** This will tell you about the quality of their commitment to academics. The team's grade-point average also is a good indicator of the coach's commitment to academics.
- 3. Describe the typical class sizes??** At larger schools, classes are likely to be larger and taught by teaching assistants. Average class size is important to the amount of attention you receive.
- 4. Describe in detail your academic support program??** For example: Study hall requirements, tutor availability, staff, class load, faculty cooperation. This is imperative for marginal students. Find a college that will take the 3.0 students and help them get a 3.5 GPA.
- 5. Describe the typical day for a student-athlete.** This will give you a good indication of how much time is spent in class, practice, studying and traveling. It also will give you a good indication of what coaches expect.
- 6. What are the residence halls (dorms) like??** Make sure you would feel comfortable in study areas, community bathrooms and laundry facilities. Number of students in a room and coed dorms are other variable to consider.
- 7. Will I be required to live on campus for all four years??** If the answer is yes, ask whether there are exceptions. Apartment living may be better than dorm living.

## A Few Financial Aid Questions:

- 1. How much financial aid is available for summer school??** There is no guarantee. Get a firm commitment. You may need to lighten your normal load and go to summer school in order to graduate in four years. You can take graduate courses and maintain your eligibility.
- 2. What are the details of financial aid at your institution??** What does my scholarship cover?? What can I receive in addition to the Scholarship and how do I get more aid?
- 3. How long does my scholarship last??** Most people misinterpret that a "full ride" is good for four years. Financial aid is available on a one-year renewable basis.
- 4. If I'm injured, what happens to my financial aid??** A grant-in-aid is not guaranteed past a one-year period even for injuries. It is important to know if a school has a commitment to assist student-athletes for more than a year after they have been injured.
- 5. What are my opportunities for employment while I'm a student??** Find out if you can be employed in-season, out-of-season or during vacation periods: NCAA rules prohibit you from earning more than the value of a full scholarship during the academic year.

**In Conclusion...** - It is true that there are a few travel teams who garner so much attention from college coaches that their top players really don't have to do much other than play well to get recruiting offers. But these athletes represent a small percentage of the total number of prospects. The vast majority of kids will probably have to work very hard if they want to find a college and a team. They and their parents simply cannot make the mistake of assuming they/their daughter will be 'snapped' up by college coaches just because she was All-District in high school or because she hit two home runs last spring. They simply cannot sit back and wait for the phone to ring. **YOU MUST BE PROACTIVE!!!**

When talking to coaches about the college search process and recruiting, it has become increasingly evident to me that many college coaches are simply overwhelmed. They not only cannot see -- let alone discover -- every player out there, but many of them can't even get through the mail on their desk! A coach who has 40 videos sitting in front of her may look at fifteen of them and find three players she likes enough to call, go see play, etc. Because of that, she may discover, recruit and sign a player long before she ever gets to tape number 37 -- which happens to be your daughter's tape. Several coaches told me recently that while the video is critical in getting them to consider a player (particularly if they can't see her in person), follow-up was equally important. One coach told me she had sent out about 50 requests for videos to kids. Of the 30 or 35 players who actually sent tapes back only four or five called to follow-up -- e.g., to ask if she'd gotten the tape and to find out where she stood with recruiting. This coach said she paid a lot more attention to those four or five kids because of their phone calls. It definitely made a difference in her response to a player if she knew that player was so interested that she would make the effort to call--no matter how scary that phone call might be!

Most coaches don't mind if parents call unless they sense the parent is doing a 'hard sell.' But almost all coaches like it when a player is brave or confident enough to call them herself. It tells them a lot about her desire to play in college.

We will acknowledge that some college coaches are too busy (or too disorganized) to return a phone call or, in lieu of a call, to send a letter saying, 'Thanks, but we're not interested.' So as disappointing as it may be, we usually tell an athlete if she calls a coach three times over a couple of weeks and the coach just ignores those calls, it's time to move on to other schools. It's also good to keep in mind that at many of the 'big name' programs, they have secretarial staffs to write nice letters and handle PR for them. We often hear that a player has gotten a gracious letter from the #1 or #2 or #4 school in the nation saying, 'You're a fine athlete. If you decide you want to attend our college, please let us know. We'd be happy to have you try out as a walk-on... etc., etc.' Yet we may also know the odds on this player making the team are very slim. We know the coach at that school. He or she has signed four seniors from nationally-known travel teams, and he or she will have twenty kids trying out as walk-ons, including several more players from those same big name travel teams. He or she will keep two or three, and the rest of the kids will get cut. It's a business and that's how it's run. But the school's or team's image is important too, and no one wants to deliberately hurt a player's feelings. Hence the nice letters welcoming you to walk on.

We've had many parents complain about some coach who wrote their daughter a blunt 'rejection' letter. And they'll often contrast that with the 'big name' school coach who sent a lovely letter saying she was welcome to try out as a walk-on. Personally, if I was the parent of a player who passionately loved the game and who really wanted to play, I would much rather a coach tell me the kid wouldn't make the team than lead me on. Sure, she's welcome to try out. But at that point, she's already chosen the college, enrolled, moved to the school and turned down other colleges where she could really play.

Now if playing softball isn't that important, but attending Stanford, MIT, or Harvard is, that's fine. Go to school there, have a great college life, and if you have to give up softball, so be it. But if your athlete really, really wants to play, you can find a team that will give her that opportunity even if it's not the #1 team in the nation. Believe me, there are lots of coaches at smaller programs out there who love to hear from a player who's interested in their school.

Ten years ago, if you just wrote a coach and maybe sent a video, you had a good chance that the coach would try to see you play or would respond to your letter at the very least. That's not enough any more. There's just too many players in the mix. You almost have to do something that makes you stand out. Obviously, it's terrific if you can do this on the field during a game when a coach is watching you. But it also helps if you are willing to try to sell your love of softball to a coach. That's where the phone calls come in. Coaches know how hard this is for you to call a stranger, but they are more likely to take you seriously because it is so hard. So is college softball!

Make that effort, take the chance. You may get turned down; that's part of life. But you may also steal a spot on a team away from another player who couldn't or wouldn't make pick up the phone! Stay on task and be confident. **GOOD LUCK!!!**