

CollegelInfo

Writing to College Coaches—When? How?

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is the strictest of all the collegiate athletic associations when it comes to written communication between college coaches and potential recruits. Division I and II NCAA coaches are not allowed to write student-athletes until September of their junior year. However, student-athletes may write to any college no matter what that college's athletic affiliation. They can send competition schedules and resumes to colleges any time they choose during their high school career. Student athletes who write to NCAA Division I or II colleges before September 1 of their junior year should expect a response similar to this one sent by Division I UCLA to a sophomore soccer player:

"Thank-you for your interest in the UCLA Women's Soccer program. Under the NCAA rules, effective August 1, 1991, we are unable to provide you with specific information about our program. However, we are permitted to enclose a UCLA Athletic Department questionnaire for you to fill out and return to us.

Also due to the NCAA legislation, we cannot correspond regularly with you until September 1 at the start of your junior year in High School. We cannot telephone you until July 1st after you have completed your high school junior year."

Thank you for your interest in UCLA Soccer. We wish you the best of luck and will keep your letter on file.

Many student-athletes are aware of these rules. So, they often wait until after September 1 of their junior year to write to a college coach. This can be a big mistake. Taking an "I'll wait to see who shows interest in me" attitude is dangerous. If other student-athletes at a similar level of achievement have contacted a college coach, that coach will generally look more favorably on the individual that has shown some personal initiative.

The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), NCAA Division III, Christian Colleges, Independents, and Junior Colleges have different rules and usually welcome hearing from prospective athletes early in the recruiting process. It is obvious that many student-athletes are being identified early because many top athletic prospects do receive letters early in September of their junior year. It never hurts to help the identification process by writing before the college coach can make contact.

Basketball, soccer, volleyball, football etc. summer camps often have clinicians with affiliations to college athletic programs. If you will be attending a sports camp the summer before your junior year, find out what clinicians will be attending from college programs and send them a letter, resume and background materials before you attend the camp. If camp clinicians have prior notice that you are interested in their college program, they will usually make an effort to observe and evaluate your level of play. However, be careful about approaching college coaches or assistants at summer camps to talk specifically about their college programs as doing so will be illegal for some of the coaches. Others may be uncomfortable advertising their college program in the summer camp setting.

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