

10 things you should know about the college recruiting process

ONE

You are allowed to contact any coach via e-mail at any time. This includes sophomores and freshmen. During that time, however, coaches are only allowed to send general info via snail mail. As a sophomore & junior, your job is to fill out recruiting forms of any college you are interested in swimming for. Be sure to fill out as many of the fields as possible, as accurately as possible. This will create a file of your information in the coach's office.

TWO

“General correspondence” can begin any time after September 1st of your junior year. General Correspondence means that a coach can begin to contact potential recruits via e-mail. These emails will likely invite you to fill out a recruiting form on their website if you haven’t already. If you are interested in a coach who reached out to you, keep the contact going. Update the coach on your athletic and academic progress. The more you improve both in and out of the pool, the more they will want you. Remember: even though coaches are allowed to e-mail you, they are not allowed to call you. You are, however, permitted to call them. If they are able to answer, they can talk to you, but they are not allowed to call you under any circumstances, including returning a voicemail.

THREE

The summer following your junior year is when coaches are allowed to contact recruits via phone (July 1 for D-I, June 15 for D-II, no restrictive dates for D-III or NAIA).

FOUR

If a coach is interested in you, they will invite you on an official recruiting trip. These give you an opportunity to stay over in a dorm with members of the swim team, go to class with them, and get a feel for what it would be like to attend the school.

The school typically pays for official recruiting trips, though policies are changing to increase the financial burden on a prospective athlete.

Unofficial recruiting trips require the athlete to pay for their food and other fees while they are visiting, in addition to covering their transportation and housing costs. But remember, an unofficial trip can become official if a team so much as buys a recruit a hot dog. Coaches will often invite high school juniors to attend a more general Junior Day, which are often available to all prospective students, not just student-athletes. Official visits only allow a recruit to be on campus for 48 hours.

FIVE

As seniors, athletes are limited to 5 official visits to Division I schools. Because Division III schools do not offer athletic scholarships, student athletes can take recruiting trips to an unlimited number of Division III schools, but only one official visit per school. As of last year, Division II now allows unlimited official visits by prospective student-athletes.

SIX

High school student athletes are not allowed to practice with Division I teams on recruiting trips, though they can use the practice facility as long as coaches are not present. Athletes can practice with Division II teams.

SEVEN

Rules about accepting compensation to swim are very complex. The NCAA rules were changed a few years ago and this area is still pretty gray. If a recruit has inadvertently accepted “prize” money they can usually return it and regain their eligibility. As long as money is given for expenses recruits are allowed to receive it. As you know FINA has also started to sponsor swimmers from underdeveloped countries by paying for everything including extra living expenses, which is allowed by the NCAA. When in doubt, seek out advice directly from the NCAA.

EIGHT

Once you have received your athletic scholarship details, you may decide to sign a letter of intent. This binding agreement commits you to attend the university and swim for their team, receiving the amount of scholarship money you have been given.

NINE

Once you have signed a letter of intent, you are allowed unlimited contact with your future coach.

TEN

Before the signing periods athletes may verbally commit to a college or university, however, verbal commitments can be broken.

Although it can be overwhelming, remind yourself that whatever happens, you will end up at a school where you can excel academically and athletically. Have fun when choosing the best place for you. You are preparing for what has the potential to be the best four years of your life.

Questions

- What is registering with the NCAA clearing house?
- Do I need a recruiting video?
- What is the role of involvement with the High School and Club Coaches?
- What is the guidance counselor role?
- Should we hire a recruiter?
- What about college visit behavior?
- What is the Head Coaches process with athlete
- How should my child choose the right school

Resources

- ncaaclearinghouse.net
- NCAA.org
- athleticscholarships.net
- CollegeSwimming.com
- Lemonaid