

## Athletic/Recruiting Process Summary:

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- The Swimmer and the SA Coaches' Role
- The Parent's Role

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- Who Initiates the Recruiting Process?
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## Athletic/Recruiting Process:

### Is the Myths True about my Ability to Swim in College?

**Fast Times overshadow Poor Grades: Not true.** You are going to college (school!) and performance in the classroom is very important to the coaches. Coaches can't afford to take a risk on athletes who may end up unable to compete because they become academically ineligible. Therefore, when deciding which schools to pursue, it is important to be honest with yourself about the academic fit of an institution.

**I'm a Fast Swimmer; I will be recruited: Maybe, maybe not.** Most coaches have very limited recruiting budgets and scarce time to find athletes. This makes it difficult for coaches to find potential recruits and puts the onus on the swimmer to find the teams.

**A questionnaire in the mail means a team is interested:** Many coaches send out piles and piles of questionnaires based on League Results, USA databases, etc. They often send out questionnaires to swimmers they have never heard of. If you are not interested, don't fill out the questionnaire.

**D-1 is the only place to swim: misconception.** In fact many D-3 and D-2 schools provide stronger academics and much stronger swim programs than many of the D-1 schools. The D-2/D-3 programs may, in fact, offer a more balanced college experience than the competitive D-1 programs. D3 schools do not, however, offer any athletic scholarships (financial aid and academic scholarships may be available).

**You are not good enough to swim in college:** There are many many collegiate swim programs available. True, acceptance into the strongest programs is intensely competitive. However, many programs are looking for college students that they can develop further, numerous, of which will have scholarships available. If you want to swim in college and are willing to do the legwork, then most likely, there is a place for you on a collegiate swim team. But, It is up to you to **initiate the process.**

**I can start the process during the summer between my Junior and Senior Year:** You can start then but work fast and furiously. Many swimmers have started months, if not years, before but it is not imperative that you have done so. If you have developed a relationship with a team prior to this, continually update them with developments to confirm your continued interest in their program. This will ensure the most success. It is important to keep in mind that, for many programs, it is during the summer months that coaches are finalizing their list of invitees for fall recruit trips.

## What is a PSA?

Potential Student Athlete ( you )

## Recruiting Websites:

One avenue to create interest is to register on a national recruiting website like [collegeswimming.com](http://collegeswimming.com) & [berecruited.com](http://berecruited.com). Many college coaches review these websites in an effort to identify potential swimmers. Coaches also look at [collegeswimming.com](http://collegeswimming.com) which ranks individual high school swimmers throughout the year based on their reported times. Your SA coaches and other swimmers may have suggestions on recruiting websites that have proven successful in previous years.

## When do I begin the recruitment process?

The time line outlined is ideal. Certainly, if you are an elite swimmer, it is more likely that coaches will find you and that the process may be sped up. Swimming recruitment is very competitive. Therefore, it is to your advantage to start early but it is not too late to begin your junior year, even spring of your junior year. Beginning July 1<sup>st</sup> (between an athlete's Junior and senior year), coaches are able to contact PSAs directly once per week. Prior to that time, it is up to the swimmer to initiate telephone contact. The summer months are typically the time when coaches are narrowing down their choices and deciding who will be invited on recruit trips in the Fall. As recruiting budgets are very limited, they rely on these calls and email conversations to ascertain swimmers who are the best "fit" for their program. If you know a swimmer already on the team, contact them and let them know of your interest in swimming at that particular college.

PSAs are allowed to attend up to 5 official college visits (5 separate schools) and unlimited "unofficial" visits. While 5 may not seem like very many, it is difficult to find the time to attend 5 trips given a swimmer's senior year academic course load, swimming schedule, standardized test schedule and the entire college application process (which may feel like a full time job!). Choose trips wisely and be respectful of the process and the other PSAs. Choose trips to schools where you truly feel like they are one of your top 5 college choices. Don't just take a trip

because it might be fun as it reflects poorly on you and on Orinda Aquatics and it is disrespectful to the other PSAs for whom the opportunity to swim for that particular school may be a dream come true. Colleges may only be able to offer recruit trips to 5-10 athletes. That doesn't mean that if you aren't offered a trip, you won't be recruited, but recruiting trips do provide the best opportunity to meet the entire team, the other potential recruits, the coaches, attend classes with a swimmer, observe a workout and feel what it would be like to be part of that particular team. There is almost always the opportunity to meet with a team unofficially if you have not been offered or it is too late for an official recruit trip. As school starts in the fall, the coaches will be very busy coaching their existing team and finalizing their recruits for the following year. College meets begin in October and extend through the championships in February and March. Most coaches would like to wrap up their new class of recruits by the end of the calendar year so that they may focus on their current season.

### Who initiates the recruitment process?

**You do.** The recruitment process is extremely competitive but you can be successful. Just remember that you are competing with literally thousands of other swimmers who are also trying to earn a spot on a college team. In order to be recruited, **the coaches need to know about you.** In other words, you need to **market and advertise yourself.** Think of it as a job interview. If you are an elite swimmer, then chances are, they probably already know of you, but if not, then it is up to you to market and promote yourself and to let coaches know that you want to swim on their team. Just like an employer, coaches want swimmers who want them. As you start the process, here are a few tips:

- Please don't rely on your SA coaches to man the phones to find a team for you. They are familiar with many programs throughout the country and they will review and discuss the SA grid with you to help you expand or narrow your list. They will work closely with the collegiate coaches and write letters of recommendations for you throughout the process, but it is your job to get your name into the market.
- Develop your Swimming Athletic Resume and cover letter.
- Submit on-line Swimming questionnaires for colleges of interest to you
- Develop your own list of potential schools based on academics, geographic region, size of school, recruiting times, etc. You may want to start this process with SA's "Starting Off Grid". This sorting grid is specific to the profile of Streamliner Aquatics and while not totally inclusive of every college program, it starts with 100+ colleges/universities. The grid allows you to sort by many factors depending on your priorities and include: area of the country, size of the school, standardized test scores, recruiting times, etc. If you do not have a copy of this grid, please ask Ronnie or Donnie.
- Discuss with your coaches and your parents what your goals are for your college experience: both academically and athletically
- Contact coaches as soon as you determine that you are interested in their program/school.

Recruiting budgets are very small and the coaches' available time for recruiting is limited. This means that coaches have to rely on lower cost methods of finding prospective student athletes i.e. searching league results and times data bases and getting referrals from existing team members. Thus, contacting coaches directly and promoting yourself to teams that appear to be a good fit, is a great deal for both the swimmer and the college coach. It is important to present yourself in the best light by being as **organized, sincere, mature and honest** as possible.

### What is the difference between D1, D2 and D3 Swim teams?

It seems as though the majority of PSAs initially gravitate towards the Div 1 swim teams as they begin their search. Determining which Division largely depends on the athlete's goals. In general, from an athletic perspective, the upper tier of Div 1 is the most competitive. However, there is a huge amount of diversity within each division and also within each conference within each division like the Pac10 and the Ivies (which are both D1). Most of the schools that you are familiar with nationally will likely be D1 or D3 schools. Additionally, many of the top tier Division 3 schools are "faster" than the bottom half of Division 1. As an example, you will find that Emory, Kenyon,

Johns Hopkins and Denison (all D3) would be able to compete head to head with midlevel D1 schools such as UC Davis, UCSB and Cal Poly. Many of the swimmers in Div2/3 would be extremely competitive in some Div 1 conferences. The decision is typically more complicated than just times as the Divisions vary in other ways too ie the recruiting rules, scholarships, training requirements, restrictions etc. Typically, Div2/3 schools are a little smaller and offer a different collegiate environment and experience than the Div 1 schools. In many ways, Div1 is more like a job and many of the swimmers are on scholarship whereas many Div3 teams attempt to strike more of a balance between athletics/academics/activities. Athletic Scholarships are allowed at both D1 and D2 but not at D3, however, there may be very limited scholarships and those are divided up between numerous athletes. After researching financial aid packages at various D3 schools, it may in fact be that the D3 option is less expensive than D1.

The following is a link to the NCSA Sports website which gives general guidelines for swim times to swim in each division (scroll towards the end for Swimming):

<http://www.ncsasports.org/how-do-you-get-recruited-recruiting-process-begin>

## **Preparation: Sports Resume, Cover Letters and Correspondence:**

### **Sports Resume (see example in link that follows):**

While you can start contacting coaches as early as your freshman year (elite swimmers), it is more common that your “resume” most likely isn’t “complete” until mid-Junior year at the earliest. But whenever you are ready to begin either with campus/coach visits, phone calls or emails to coaches, first develop a Sports Resume to send to them or to leave with them when you meet them in person. You can update this resume as frequently as you want (time improvements, the addition of test scores, activities, voted team captain, etc). After your initial contact, continue to provide email updates to coaches on changes (better times, new test results, becoming captain of the team, leadership positions at school, academic achievements, etc.) They want to hear from you as it is an expression of your interest in their team. You will want to get your name in front of the coaches on a regular basis.

When emailing your Sports Resume to coaches, make sure that you include a specifically tailored cover letter (see below). This cover letter should indicate why you are interested in swimming at this particular school and **why that specific school is of interest to you academically**. You can also include your height and weight, your training regimen (include dryland / weight training), your practice schedule and your collegiate swim goals.

### **Cover Letters (see samples in link that follows):**

When emailing your Sports resume, attach a **short cover letter** that is specifically tailored to each college and coach. The goal of the cover letter is to highlight the information that the coach is going to need to quickly qualify as a PSA for their team. This information includes:

- academics and scores (GPA and standardized test scores)
- best times in your best events
- academic interests
- the number of years you have been swimming year round
- interest in swimming in college/collegiate athletic goals

You may want to include additional information such as why you are interested in that specific college ie academic reputation, a particular program that is offered, location, reputation of the team, lifelong dream to attend that school, etc.

Today, the email communication is the preferred method for most coaches. Consequently, once you have initiated the process by sending out emails, check your emails frequently and be responsive to any communiqué from a coach. This reaffirms your genuine interest in their program. For each college contacted, make sure you maintain a specific folder within your email or print out each correspondence to keep in a dedicated file folder and even keep notes of telephone conversations. As you contact many different schools, it can get confusing. Keep track of the coaches' names at each school!

### **Additional Correspondence with Coaches (see samples in link that follow):**

After your initial contact with a specific school, continue to routinely update the coaches via email (it may go into your file) on both your academic and athletic progress and your interest in attending their school. It is very important that you continue to express your interest in the team and, if appropriate, your interest in being invited on a recruit trip in the fall. Most schools schedule their recruit trips for September-October and are formulating their list of recruits during the summer months.

#### **Links:**

- [Sports Resume, Cover Letter, & Correspondence](#)
- [Trips and Preparation \(includes "Questions to Ask Coaches"\)](#)
- [NCAA Recruitment Guidelines/Eligibility Clearance Center](#)

### **College Sports is a Two-Way Fit:**

#### **What are college coaches looking for in their recruits?**

It is important to remember, that while PSAs should be looking for a school/team that is the right "fit", so too are the coaches looking for swimmers that are the right "fit", which is more than just "times". While not all the coaches are desirous of the same things, per USA Swimming, they do share the same needs (in no particular order):

- **Academics:** Coaches seek recruits who are motivated both in the classroom as well as in the pool. Recruits must meet the academic requirements of a particular college or university. Coaches want to be sure that each recruit will remain academically eligible throughout his or her collegiate career. Swimming is just a subset of the collegiate experience-you may actually spend as much time studying as you will train perhaps even more! That's why coaches desire recruits who can succeed both in and out of the pool and are excited by their success both in their studies and their sport. Additionally, they want to know what you are leaning towards as a possible major in order to ascertain if their school is a good total fit. While the athletes are reviewing the schools, the coaches are also considering the probability of whether or not each PSA will actually decide that their school is the right match.
- **Leadership:** Not only do coaches want talented and motivated swimmers, but they want talented leaders who will have the ability to help motivate and lead the team in the future. They are important ingredients in a team's success. Team captains, for instance, are highly regarded for their leadership, dedication and ability to motivate. A leader improves his or her team through hard work, team focus and a contagious desire to improve personally and collectively.
- **Work Ethic and Dedication:** it is important that swimmers have demonstrated strong, consistent work ethic (both in the pool and in the classroom). This work ethic will help the swimmers to motivate their fellow teammates and help them to compete effectively. Work ethic and dedication is even more important for the mid and long distance swimmers. Coaches are also looking for athletes that will represent their program well both in and out of the water.

- **Success:** Coaches review past results to ascertain if a swimmer could fill the needs of their respective team i.e. they need a mid-distance freestyler, they will be graduating 3 senior breaststrokers this season, their incoming freshman is a sprint backstroker, etc. Past results are indicative of a recruit's talent and ability to compete and contribute in the NCAA atmosphere. In studying meet results, each coach attempts to fill the needs of his or her team, looking to fill team weaknesses first.
- **Potential:** Coaches review a PSA's year-to-year results to track an athlete's potential. Coaches want swimmers to continue to improve, remain motivated and dedicated, and thus stay with the team for four years. Potential, of course, extends far beyond the pool. Athletes can highlight potential by explaining new dry land routines, training regimens, dietary focuses, etc.
- **Versatility:** Many coaches may find swimmers who can effectively compete in more than one event, as opposed to being a one-or-two man specialist, a more attractive prospect as versatility is rewarded in the NCAA dual meet format. Coaches are limited as to the number of swimmers on their travel teams. Versatility is highly rewarded in the NCAA dual meet format, in which athletes are allowed to swim several events and relays. It tends to be even more highly prized by smaller teams that struggle to fill lanes during dual meets. Larger teams are likely to be more selective, recruiting stroke specialists with greater ease. Understanding the needs of particular teams will allow you to market yourself more effectively.
- **Personality and Enthusiasm:** Coaches (and teams) will always be attracted to outgoing, personable recruits precisely because their teams will welcome those individuals. A teammate who carries a smile to practice and a contagious aura of enthusiasm is an enjoyable and effective peer. During recruiting trips or phone conversations, remember always to convey your enthusiasm and to smile! Again, it is the overall "fit" on the team that is important.

### How do Coaches Decide who is a Fit?

The coaches learn many things throughout the recruiting process. Not only are they focused on your times and potential but also on your academics. They will probably have spent quite a bit of time talking to PSAs on the phone, through emails and also on recruit trips. They have observed how the PSA meshes with the existing team and gotten their opinion as to whether or not a PSA would fit in. Coaches also talk to people who might know the PSA, high school/club coaches, and family. They will also want to know that a family will be able to handle the financial obligation. The coach wants to know that everyone will be able to work together. It is not just enough that a swimmer is fast or that they are a fit for the team. The PSA needs to demonstrate that they have a lot of desire and that they want to continue to work hard for another four years. This requires a personal commitment. Coaches are also looking for swimmers that are team players and supportive of their teammates in both training and competition. They are looking for PSAs who will bring things to the table that will help the team as a whole i.e. leadership and that they will "fit in". As one coach said, "You want people to come in and swim well, do well athletically, and have a lot of fun, be a lot of fun, and be happy alumni. It shouldn't be less than that."

### Finding YOUR Athletic Fit: What are YOU looking For?

#### Research Potential team's Championship League Results and NCAA results: Where do I "fit"?

You can not tell specifically where you will fit in on a team but you can get strong indications of whether or not a team might be an athletic fit. Coaches will be interested in athletes who have the potential to score for their team at their conference championships. Coaches are most likely to be interested in filling their existing and projected gaps for subsequent seasons. Research and print copies of each potential school's conference and championship results for later referral. Review the team's website and roster for meet results and times to see if your times appear to be a fit for that team. If a particular team seems like it might be a "fit" then you may want to consider other teams in their specific conference. If you are unfamiliar with any teams, you could start with NCAA website and research Div 1, 2 and 3 championship results/preliminaries and target teams from those lists. A great website to review Conference and team results is [www.collegeswimming.com](http://www.collegeswimming.com).

## Develop a Detailed List of your Athletic Criteria

After you have created a list of your academic criteria and researched colleges for which your times appear to be a “fit”, it is important to specifically define what your swim goals are for the next four years. Take the time to thoroughly think this through as it will be a key to finding a team that is the right overall fit. There is no right or wrong answers as this is about you. Therefore, be introspective and honest with yourself. You are the one choosing your own college experience. Some suggested things to consider and/or to inquire about are:

- **Training:** do you want to train harder, as hard or less than you currently train?
- **Training Regimen:** Is it flexible? Are all practices required? What is the schedule?
- **Academics:** Will you be able to compete academically if you are part of this team?
- **Composition:** Do you want a co-ed team or separate men’s and women’s teams?
- **Improvement:** Do you care about continued improvement or are you looking for a team to be part of? Is it the right level of competition for you?
- **Championships:** Is it important to you to go to League or NCAA Championships?
- **Team Performance:** Is it important how strong the team is relative to the competition?
- **Travel Team:** Will it matter to you whether or not you make the travel team?
- **Facility:** Is the quality of the facility important to you?
- **Coaches:** Do you like them? How do the swimmers describe them? What are the interactions coach to coach and coach to athlete?
- **Coach’s Philosophy:** What type of team philosophy would mesh with you?
- **Team Culture:** What are your criteria? Competitive? Supportive? Family feeling? Business like? Do you fit in with the team culture and goals?
- **Team Social:** Can you fit in socially with the team? What do they do for fun?
- **Position:** Who do you want to be on the team: superstar? Hold team records? Middle of the pack spurred on by the faster swimmers? Slowest but want to be part of strong team?
- **Scholarship Opportunities:** important or not?
- **Athletic Department Support:** Is the team an important part of the athletic department. Is continued funding an issue?
- **Summer and Winter Break Training requirements:** What are they? Cost?
- **Athletic Support:** What kind of support, if any, is provided i.e. tutoring, priority registration, meals, trainers, laundry services, etc?
- **Reputation/success:** Have SA swimmers or swimmers you know been part of this program? What was their experience?
- **Other Activities:** Will the team support involvement in other activities i.e. clubs, internships, study abroad, Greek system, employment, etc?
- **Walk-ons:** Is there the potential to walk-on the team?
- **Other?**

## Qualifying Times (links):

- [2016 NCAA Division 1 Championship Qualifying Times](#)
- [2016 NCAA Division 2 Championship Qualifying Times](#)
- [2016 NCAA Division 3 Championship Qualifying Times](#)