

# Are you thinking about playing college sports?

First, you need to know more about the three NCAA® divisions:

- **Division I** is the biggest and most competitive NCAA division. Colleges that compete in Division I must offer scholarships—many cover full tuition—to their student-athletes.
- **Division II** athletic programs are smaller and less competitive than those in Division I. Most student-athletes don't get full scholarships, but many get financial aid.
- **Division III** programs are the least competitive. Division III colleges don't offer sports-related financial aid but do recruit athletes, which can help you get into a college that wants you in its program.

Students who want to compete at a [Division I or Division II](#) college must meet standards set by NCAA members. For Division III, athletes must meet the admission standards set by each college. Find out more about eligibility standards on the [NCAA website](#).

Next, take these steps to make sure you're thinking about your high school academics and postcollege career plans proactively:

**When you're in 9th grade:**

- Ask your counselor for a list of your high school's [NCAA core courses](#) and learn more about the academic requirements for both Division I and Division II
  - This is important because your high school's graduation requirements might not satisfy the NCAA or the colleges you want to attend
- Create a 4-year high school plan
- Check if your high school offers the [PSAT 8/9](#)
- Start to think and ask about [careers that interest you](#)
- Explore internship opportunities and ways to save for college

**When you're in 10th grade:**

- Register for an NCAA Certification Account or Profile Page at the [NCAA Eligibility Center](#)
- Meet with your counselor again and ask [these 20 questions](#) to make sure you're on track with college planning
- Take the [PSAT 10 or PSAT/NMSQT](#)
- Research financial aid, and don't hesitate to ask an adult you trust for help. Some stats from the [NCAA](#):
  - Division I colleges offer multiyear, cost-of-attendance athletics scholarships—59% of student-athletes receive athletics aid
  - Division II colleges offer partial athletics scholarships—62% of student-athletes receive athletics aid
  - Division III colleges do not offer athletics scholarships, but 80% of student-athletes receive nonathletics aid
- Attend college and career fairs with this [checklist](#) to help you get the information you want
- Participate in student clubs or volunteer

### When you're in 11th grade:

- Take the [PSAT/NMSQT](#) and learn about eligibility for the National Merit® Scholarship Program
- Ask your counselor about [SAT fee waivers](#)
  - If you're eligible, you'll get other benefits like unlimited free score reports and free college application fee waivers
- Register for the SAT and [link your College Board account](#) to Official SAT Practice on Khan Academy® for free practice tests
- If you've taken the PSAT/NMSQT, explore career opportunities with the [interactive Roadmap to Careers](#)
- Create a username and password for the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) and gather necessary tax returns and other financial documents
- Build a college list with the [college search tool](#) on BigFuture™ and edit it as you discover more colleges
- Take the SAT and use code 9999 to make sure the NCAA gets your score
- Visit colleges
- Review application materials needed for the colleges you're interested in
  - Some colleges ask for letters of recommendation—think about which teacher, coach, or counselor you would ask
- At the end of the year, ask your counselor to upload your official transcript to the [NCAA Eligibility Center](#)

### When you're in 12th grade:

- Narrow down and strengthen your college list, and note early admission and regular application deadlines
- If you take the SAT again, make sure you practice with [Official SAT Practice on Khan Academy](#) and use code 9999 to send your score to the NCAA
- Order official SAT score reports for the colleges you're applying to
- Complete the [FAFSA](#)
- Draft your application essays and ask for feedback
- Ask your counselor to send your official transcript to colleges
- Complete your college applications by the deadline
- Request your final amateurism certification from the NCAA after April 1 at the [NCAA Eligibility Center](#)
- Commit to a college by May 1