



FleetForge Guide to NCAA / NAIA / JUCO Baseball Recruiting & Eligibility

Everything families need to know about the college baseball path

Clarity for families. Opportunity for athletes.

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Understanding the Levels

NCAA Division I

Highest level of college athletics. Schools offer up to 11.7 scholarships (split among ~35 players). Demanding schedule; strict recruiting rules and academic standards.

NCAA Division II

Strong athletics with more academic flexibility. Up to 9 scholarships. Less media coverage but competitive baseball.

NCAA Division III

No athletic scholarships. Focus on student-athlete experience. Coaches use academic/merit aid to recruit. Often strong academics.

NAIA

Smaller schools, up to 12 scholarships. Flexible recruiting rules. Good path for athletes who want to play right away.

JUCO (Junior College)

2-year programs. Up to 24 scholarships. Great for athletes needing academic improvement or more development time. Strong pipeline to 4-year programs.

Each level offers a unique path. The right fit depends on athletic ability, academic goals, and family priorities.

Academic Eligibility Requirements

Level	Eligibility Center	Core Courses	Min GPA	Test Scores	Deadline
DI	NCAA Eligibility Center	16 core courses	2.3 min (sliding scale w/ test scores)	SAT/ACT required	Register by start of junior year
DII	NCAA Eligibility Center	16 core courses	2.2 min	SAT/ACT required	Register by start of junior year
DIII	N/A (college admissions)	Meet institution requirements	College-specific	College-specific	Apply to colleges directly
NAIA	NAIA Eligibility Center	HS diploma	2 of 3: 18 ACT / 860 SAT, 2.0 GPA, top 50% class rank	See 2-of-3 rule	Register before arrival
JUCO	N/A	HS diploma or GED	Varies by college	Varies	Apply directly

Note: The NCAA DI sliding scale means a higher GPA can offset lower test scores, and vice versa. Check the current sliding scale chart at ncaa.org.

Key Academic Tips

- Start tracking core course requirements in 9th grade — not all classes count.
- Take the SAT or ACT early in junior year so you have time to retake if needed.
- The NCAA Eligibility Center uses a specific list of approved core courses for each high school.
- NAIA's 2-of-3 rule gives flexibility — you only need to meet two of the three criteria.
- JUCO is an excellent option for students who need time to improve grades before transferring to a 4-year school.

The Recruiting Timeline

Freshman Year (9th Grade)

- Focus on academics and becoming a better player
- Attend local camps and showcases
- Start building a highlight video
- Create NCAA Eligibility Center account (free)

Sophomore Year (10th Grade)

- Take PSAT; begin SAT/ACT prep
- Update highlight video regularly
- Research 20–30 schools (academic + athletic fit)
- Attend prospect camps at colleges of interest
- Begin introductory emails to coaches

Junior Year (11th Grade)

- NCAA DI: Coaches can begin calling June 15 after sophomore year (DII earlier)
- Take SAT/ACT early; retake if needed
- Send updated academic transcripts + video to coaches
- Schedule unofficial visits
- Attend high-visibility showcases (PBR, PG, etc.)
- Narrow list to 8–12 serious programs

Senior Year (12th Grade)

- NCAA DI: Official visits begin Sept 1 (up to 5 paid)
- Compare scholarship offers and financial aid packages
- Early Signing Period: mid-November
- Regular Signing Period: mid-April
- Make commitment and sign NLI

Contact Rules by Division

Division	Phone Calls	Texts / DMs	In-Person (Off Campus)	Official Visits	Dead Periods
DI	After June 15 soph year	After June 15 soph year	Contact periods only	After Sept 1 junior yr (5 max)	Yes (check calendar)
DII	June 15 after soph year	June 15 after soph year	Contact periods only	After official visit date	Yes (check calendar)
DIII	Anytime	Anytime	Anytime	Anytime (unlimited, unpaid)	None
NAIA	Anytime	Anytime	Anytime	Anytime	None
JUCO	Anytime	Anytime	Anytime	Anytime	None

Note: Rules change frequently. Always verify the current calendar at naia.org or the relevant governing body website.

What This Means for Families

- At DI and DII, coaches cannot initiate contact until specific dates — but you can always reach out to them first.
- Send introductory emails, highlight videos, and academic info at any time. Coaches can read them; they just can't respond until the contact date.
- DIII, NAIA, and JUCO coaches have no restrictions — take advantage of this flexibility.
- A "dead period" means no in-person contact. Coaches can still communicate by phone, text, or email during dead periods.
- Keep a spreadsheet tracking which coaches you've contacted and when. Organization matters.

Scholarships & Financial Aid

DI Baseball

11.7 scholarships split among ~35 roster spots. Most players get partial scholarships (25–50% is common). Full rides are rare.

DII

9 scholarships, also split. Partial awards are common.

DIII

Zero athletic scholarships. BUT strong academic/merit aid can cover significant costs. Many DIII families pay less than DI families.

NAIA

Up to 12 scholarships. Often more generous per player than DI/DII.

JUCO

Up to 24 scholarships. Lower tuition means scholarship dollars go further.

Academic Money

Available at ALL levels. GPA and test scores can unlock thousands regardless of division.

PRO TIP

Always fill out the FAFSA. Always ask the coach what financial aid package they can put together beyond the athletic scholarship. The total cost of attendance — not just the scholarship number — is what matters.

Glossary of Recruiting Terms

NLI (National Letter of Intent)

A binding agreement between a student-athlete and an institution. Once signed, other schools must stop recruiting you.

Walk-On

A player who joins the team without a scholarship. Must try out or be invited by the coach.

Preferred Walk-On

A walk-on who has been specifically invited by the coach and guaranteed a roster spot, but without athletic scholarship money.

Redshirt

A year where a player practices with the team but does not compete. Preserves a year of eligibility.

Transfer Portal

A database that allows student-athletes to transfer to another school while maintaining eligibility.

Verbal Commitment

An informal, non-binding agreement to attend a school. Not official until the NLI is signed.

Dead Period

A time when coaches cannot have in-person contact with recruits or their families, on or off campus.

Contact Period

A time when coaches can meet with recruits and their families in person, off campus.

Quiet Period

Coaches can talk to recruits on campus only. No off-campus, in-person contact.

Evaluation Period

Coaches can watch recruits compete but cannot talk to them or their families off campus.

Blue Chip

A top-tier recruit, typically ranked nationally by scouting services.

Prospect Camp

A camp hosted by a college where coaches evaluate prospective players.

Showcase

A multi-team event designed to expose players to many college coaches at once.

PBR (Prep Baseball Report)

A scouting and ranking service that evaluates high school baseball players.

Perfect Game

A leading scouting organization that ranks and showcases amateur baseball players.

Clearinghouse

Another name for the NCAA Eligibility Center, which certifies academic eligibility.

Sliding Scale

The NCAA DI formula that balances GPA and test scores. A higher GPA offsets lower test scores.

Core Courses

Specific high school classes (English, math, science, etc.) that count toward NCAA eligibility.

FAFSA

Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Required for all federal financial aid.

EFC (Expected Family Contribution)

The amount a family is expected to pay toward college costs, based on FAFSA data.

Roster Spot

A place on the team. Scholarship or not, you need a roster spot to play.

Grey Shirt

Delaying enrollment to the spring semester. Used when fall roster spots or scholarship money is tight.

Medical Redshirt

An additional year of eligibility granted when an athlete misses a season due to injury.

