

Phase 1: Recruiting

It's a fact. Things go better (and run smoother) when you are educated and prepared. The NFHCA has created this preliminary guide to recruiting — compiled with the help of college coaches from every level — to educate you and help set you up for success as you begin the recruiting process.

There is a field hockey home for everyone, and we want to make sure you find yours.

Throughout this guide you will see several unfamiliar terms — the two used most often are 1.) NFHCA, that's us, the National Field Hockey Coaches Association and 2.) PSA, this stands for "[prospective student-athlete](#)." For the definition of PSA and any other recruiting terms, reference our helpful "[Key Recruiting Terms](#)" section.

Due to the complexity of NCAA recruiting and academic eligibility rules, this publication should not be relied upon exclusively by the prospective student-athlete. The NFHCA recommends that each PSA visit the [NCAA website](#), obtain a copy of the NCAA's [Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete](#), and contact the [NCAA Office](#) or the [appropriate conference office](#) with any specific questions they might have regarding recruiting and academic eligibility rules.

The National Field Hockey Coaches Association (NFHCA) is a nonprofit made up of over 1,600 college, high school, and club coaches from across the country. We specialize in recognizing the accomplishments of field hockey student-athletes and coaches, connecting our field hockey community, and cultivating the growth of our sport through education and conversation.



Where to go from here

Contents

Top 10 Do's.....	3
Top 10 Don'ts.....	4
Recruiting Rules Summary	5
Prospective Student-Athlete Timeline	7
Scholarships and Financial Aid	8
Academic Standards.....	9
Questions for a College Coach	10
Key Recruiting Terms.....	12

Want to learn more?

Delve deeper into NCAA recruiting with these resources and tools:

- The FREE pop-up Recruiting Seminar presented by Heather Lewis at the 2020 Winter Escape Showcase on January 17 — 19, 2020 in Lake Mary, Florida.
 - Learn “What You Need To Know and What You Need To Do” as you navigate the college recruiting process.
- MAX Field Hockey's College Tool
 - This tool helps you stay organized by searching and filtering all of the institutions of higher learning that sponsor field hockey. You'll be able to track your progress through the recruiting journey and you will also find more in-depth educational materials that relate to the college recruiting process.
- [National Collegiate Athletic Association \(NCAA\)](#)
 - 700 W. Washington Street
P.O. Box 6222
Indianapolis, Indiana 46206-6222
Phone: 317-917-6222
- [NCAA Eligibility Center](#)
 - A central clearinghouse that certifies the athletic and amateur credentials for student-athletes who wish to complete athletically at a Division I or Division II institution.

Top 10 Do's

1. Visit and attend field hockey clinics or camps at colleges of interest to you. Narrow your choices based upon your feelings about the academic, athletic, social, geographical, and financial aid opportunities available. Make decisions based upon all of the opportunities an institution offers you, not just the athletic opportunities.
2. Send an introductory correspondence to schools of interest. Be sure to use proper grammar and correct spelling when corresponding with college coaches. You should also be sure to personally address all correspondence to the head coach and make sure that the coach's name and institution are correct. Include the following information:
 - Personal Information:
 - Name
 - NCAA Eligibility Center Number (DI & DII)
 - Graduation year
 - Date of birth
 - Home address
 - Cell number
 - E-mail address
 - Club Coach – name, telephone number, e-mail address
 - High School Coach – name, school or home telephone number, e-mail address
 - Résumé: include academic, athletic, and personal achievements
 - Social Media: include your social media handles
3. When you receive a message or a response from a college coach, reply in a timely manner. This will show the coach that you are truly interested.
4. Send an update message to coaches informing them about your season, including a list of any honors and awards received and any camps and clinics you are planning to attend.
5. Send coaches the link to your online skills video. This skills video should be no longer than seven minutes and should be performed on a smooth surface.
6. Participate in hockey events outside of your high school's season.
7. Register with the [NCAA Eligibility Center](#) (Division I and II) and be sure to update and maintain your Eligibility Center profile to ensure that the proper documents get to the Eligibility Center. Familiarize yourself with NCAA Recruiting Rules.
8. Attend a practice or a game at the colleges you are considering. Evaluate their level of play and decide whether or not that level is right for you. Spend time researching the schools of interest to you. Find out how the team is doing, who makes up their player roster, how long the coaches have been at the institution, etc.
9. Be honest with the coaches who are recruiting you, especially when discussing athletic and academic scholarship offers, other institution's recruiting timelines, and any verbal commitments you may give to another coach.
10. Make sure that you can afford a school for four years and that you and/or your family can handle any loans you will need to take out to attend a given school. Ask college coaches if their university pairs athletic awards with academic awards and ask what the university's policy is on outside financial aid.

Top 10 Don'ts

1. Don't have your parents make telephone calls or write messages on your behalf. College coaches want to hear from you!
2. Don't underestimate your abilities. If you want to play field hockey in college, there is a program out there to fit your skills and abilities.
3. Don't assume that coaches will contact you first. If you are interested in a particular college, contact the coach (see the [Recruiting Rules Summary](#) for contact rules in each division).
4. Don't visit a college without letting the coach know you will be on campus. [Be prepared with questions](#) to ask and bring along updated academic and athletic information to leave with the coach.
5. Don't make a decision based solely on athletic scholarship money. You should consider all aspects of the institution as well as your own priorities.
6. Don't go to a college because you feel pressure. You are the one attending college for the next four years, not your parents or your high school or club coach. You control your college selection timeline and you should not feel pressured to choose a school before you are ready.
7. Don't forget that college coaches will review your social media profiles. Don't post anything that would make a college coach think twice about recruiting you.
8. Don't tell a college coach you are interested if you are not.
9. Don't feel the need to spend the "big bucks" on professional videos or recruiting services. A basic "do-it-yourself" video taken on a smartphone or tablet will be adequate.
10. Don't ignore your gut feelings about a particular institution. You know what is right for you.

Recruiting Rules Summary

Division I

The NCAA has strict contact rules at the Division I level. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the timeline below to ensure that you or a coach is not putting your NCAA eligibility at risk.

Anytime

- PSA Questionnaires, camp information, institutional academic information, NCAA materials, and non-athletic publications — coaches can send you these materials at anytime.

After June 15 following your Sophomore Year

- Correspondence and Private Messages — you and a college coach cannot exchange correspondence or private messages (recruiting materials, electronic communications or otherwise) before June 15 after your sophomore year.
- Incoming Phone Calls — you cannot call a college coach before June 15 after your sophomore year.
- Outgoing Phone Calls — a college coach cannot call you before June 15 after your sophomore year.

After August 1 preceding your Junior Year

- Unofficial Visits — you may not visit with a college coach at your own expense before August 1 preceding your junior year in high school. During an unofficial visit, you may now participate in physical workouts or recreational activities with the team provided a coach does not observe the activity and no student-athletes or athletics staff members report any information related to the activity back to the coach.
- Official Visits — you may not visit with a college coach at the institution's expense before August 1 preceding your junior year in high school. During an official visit, you may now participate in physical workouts or recreational activities with the team provided a coach does not observe the activity and no student-athletes or athletics staff members report any information related to the activity back to the coach.
- Off-Campus Contact — a college coach may not have contact with you off-campus before August 1 preceding your junior year in high school. Now, coaches may contact you after competition has ended during each day of a multi-day event as long as you have been released by the proper authority.

TIP
Be diligent about recording your thoughts (pros, cons, etc.) immediately after each visit.

Click [here](#) for more information about Division I recruiting rules, field hockey falls under "Other Sports."

Recruiting Rules Summary

Division II

Recruiting rules for Division II institutions differ slightly from those for Division I:

- Division II institutions may begin sending a PSA printed recruiting material beginning June 15 before the PSA's junior year.
- There are no limits on the number of telephone calls a Division II coach may make to a PSA beginning June 15 before the PSA's junior year.
- A college coach can have contact with a PSA or her parents or legal guardians off the college's campus beginning June 15 before the PSA's junior year. There is no limit on the number of these contacts.
- There is no limit to the number of official visits a PSA may make to Division II institutions.

Click [here](#) for more information about Division II recruiting rules, field hockey falls under "Other Sports."

Division III

Recruiting rules for Division III institutions are significantly different than those for Division I and Division II:

- Division III institutions are permitted to send a PSA recruiting materials at any time.
- There is no limit on the number of calls a Division III coach may make to a PSA or when these calls can be made.
- A PSA may make an unlimited number of official visits to Division III institutions, but a PSA may only make one official visit per institution.

TIP

When informing a coach that you will be attending an event, be sure to include your jersey number and team name.

Prospective Student-Athlete Timeline

Please be advised that this is a sample recruiting timeline developed by the NFHCA. Each prospective student-athlete's timeline will vary based upon their individual college selection process and the institution(s) they are considering. We encourage you to seek the advice of high school and club coaches, high school guidance counselors, and family members when establishing your recruiting timeline.

● Freshman and Sophomore Years

Start planning! Be sure to take classes that match your school's NCAA list of approved core courses.

Begin to research colleges and universities of interest to you, for a leg up, start using the MAX Field Hockey College Tool.

● Beginning of Sophomore Year

Register with the [NCAA Eligibility Center](#) by following the steps to "Create an Account."

● Junior Year

Visit, unofficially, those colleges of interest to you. If possible, call ahead to set up appointments to meet with coaches.

● Beginning of Junior Year

Plan to take the SAT and/or ACT sometime during your junior year. Use the NCAA Eligibility Center code "9999" as a score recipient. This will ensure that your official score is sent directly to the NCAA Eligibility Center.

Division I and II college coaches may begin to send recruiting information or call PSAs.

● Middle of Junior Year

Send a follow-up letter in October/November updating coaches on your junior season and upcoming playing opportunities.

● End of Junior Year

Send coaches a link to your skills video along with a transcript that includes final junior year grades, a listing of senior courses, and any SAT and/or ACT test scores.

Ask your high school guidance counselor to send a copy of your official transcript to the NCAA Eligibility Center. Please note that the NCAA Eligibility Center does not accept faxed or emailed transcripts.

● August 1 prior to Senior Year

On or after August 1, an institution may make a written offer of athletically-related financial aid, however, the institution may not permit the PSA to sign a form indicating their acceptance of the aid before the National Letter of Intent signing date.

● Beginning of Senior Year

Prepare admissions applications for those colleges of interest. Send an updated resume, transcript that includes test scores, and a link to your skills video to coaches.

Plan to take the SAT and/or ACT again, if necessary.

● Senior Year

Make official visits and be prepared to make your college selection.

● Last Day of Senior Year

Ask your high school guidance counselor to send a copy of your final transcript to the NCAA Eligibility Center, including proof of graduation.

Scholarships and Financial Aid

Athletic Scholarships

Division I

Division I field hockey programs have a maximum of 12 total scholarships.

Field hockey is an "equivalency sport," meaning, programs can offer full or partial (25%, 50%, 75%, 100%) scholarships to student-athletes. Athletic scholarships at the Division I level can include tuition, books, student fees, housing, meals, cost of attendance (COA), or any combination.

Division II

Division II field hockey programs have a maximum of 6.3 total scholarships.

Field hockey is an "equivalency sport," meaning, programs can offer full or partial (25%, 50%, 75%, 100%) scholarships to student-athletes. Athletic scholarships at the Division II level can include tuition, books, student fees, housing, meals, or any combination.

Division III

Division III field hockey programs do not offer any athletic scholarships.

MYTHS

- *Scholarships are four years, and everything is paid for.*
- *All schools offer scholarships.*
- *Need-based financial aid is the same at each school.*

Financial Aid

If a student-athlete is receiving institutional financial aid based in any degree on athletic ability, the institution must notify the student-athlete in writing on or before July 1 as to whether the aid will be renewed for the upcoming academic year. Individual institutions will have their own appeal processes as related to the renewal of athletic scholarships.

Division I institutions are now permitted to offer multi-year scholarships. Athletics scholarships must be offered for a minimum of one academic year.

[The Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) opens October 1. Check Financial Aid offices for other required documents such as CSS/Financial Aid Profile. You must submit a FAFSA to qualify for need-based financial aid packages.

Academic Standards

Division I

To be eligible to practice, compete, and receive athletic scholarships during the first full-time year, a PSA must graduate high school and meet all of the requirements listed as [NCAA initial-eligibility standards](#).

A PSA must complete 16 NCAA-approved core courses within eight academic semesters or within four consecutive academic years beginning with the start of the 9th grade. A PSA who chooses to graduate early is still required to meet the core course requirements.

Once all required paperwork is filed, a PSA will receive their academic certification. A PSA can be certified as [a qualifier](#), [an academic redshirt](#), [a nonqualifier](#), or [an early academic qualifier](#).

Click [here](#) to view Division I initial-eligibility standards.

To be eligible to practice, compete and receive athletic scholarships in your first full-time year at a Division I or II school, you must graduate from high school and meet the requirements.

Division II

The academic standards a PSA will be required to meet are changing for a PSA who will be enrolling at a Division II institution full time for the first time

on or after August 1, 2018. While the core course requirements will remain the same, the minimum GPA requirement will rise from a 2.0 to a 2.2. A PSA will also need to earn an SAT combined score or an ACT sum score that matches their core-course GPA on the sliding scale.

Once all required paperwork is filed, a PSA will receive their academic certification. A PSA can be certified as [a qualifier](#), [a partial qualifier](#), [a nonqualifier](#), or [an early academic qualifier](#).

Click [here](#) to view Division I initial-eligibility standards.

Division III

Division III institutions focus on the academic success of their student-athletes while offering a broad based, competitive athletic environment. Division III institutions are tasked with setting their own academic, admissions, and eligibility standards. PSAs interested in attending a Division III institution should contact each school of interest directly.

Questions?

There are additional differences between Divisions I, II, and III. PSAs are encouraged to research these differences when investigating the colleges they are considering. The NFHCA recommends that student-athletes obtain a copy of the [NCAA Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete](#) as well as visit the [NCAA website](#) to begin the research process.

Questions for a College Coach

It is important for a prospective student-athlete to research the colleges/universities where they are being recruited. Use the questions listed below to learn more about the program and institution you are interested in.

Athletics

- What role do you see me playing on the team? How would you evaluate my strengths and weaknesses?
- Do you [redshirt](#) freshmen? Do you redshirt injured players? Do you [grayshirt](#) incoming freshmen?
- What is the role of the scholarship athlete vs. the nonscholarship recruited athlete vs. the [walk-on](#) athlete?
- Is your program fully funded? For state universities, are the scholarships full in-state or full out-of-state scholarships?
- What positions are you currently looking to fill? How many recruits are you considering at my position?
- What is your in-season practice schedule?
- What type of time commitment is involved with traveling during season?
- How many athletes normally travel with the team?
- What are the out-of-season practice and competition requirements?
- What is your coaching style/philosophy?
- When does your contract with the institution expire?
- What roles do conditioning and weight training play in your program?
- What are the goals of your program?
- Describe a typical day for one of your players during the season? Out of season?
- What are the expectations during the summer months?
- How is your program viewed/treated within the athletic department?
- What type of budgetary support does your program receive from the athletic department?
- What equipment is provided to each player?
- What are your team rules?
- How would you characterize the personality of your team?
- What would an alum of this institution say about their experience as well as about their career path since graduating?

Academics

- Describe the typical day of one of your student-athletes.
- Does your team get priority scheduling at the university?
- Are team members required to attend study hall?
- How does the department in my intended major rate at the university?
- What is the class availability in my major? Will classes conflict with practice/games?
- Do players in your program graduate in four years?
- What is the team's GPA?
- Is tutoring available through the athletic department? Through the university?
- What is the coach's philosophy on academics?
- How does the coach monitor academic progress?
- How does a coach handle a student-athlete who is having trouble academically?
- What are the academic eligibility guidelines at that institution? In that program?
- What is the typical class size?
- How are your players viewed by the academic community/professors?

Questions for a College Coach

Campus Life

- What are the dormitories like on campus?
- Do the dining halls have extended hours for athletes and students with late afternoon classes?
- What is the availability of on-campus housing?
- Do you require your athletes to live on campus?
- Do you require incoming freshman to live together?
- Are your athletes involved in other activities on the campus such as sororities, clubs, etc.?
- Do your student-athletes work in-season, out-of-season?
- Do any of your student-athletes choose to study abroad for a semester?

Financial Aid

- Does the university allow for the pairing of athletic and academic aid?
- What is the university's policy on outside scholarships?
- Is financial aid available for summer school?
- Is financial aid available for fifth-year students?
- How do you handle scholarship renewals? What is your philosophy on increasing/decreasing scholarships?
- What does a scholarship at your institution cover?
- How do you handle scholarships for athletes who are injured?
- For "need based" institutions, how would you describe your financial aid packaging?
- What employment opportunities are available?

Key Recruiting Terms

Academic Redshirt — A Division I academic qualification term applied to a PSA. An academic redshirt may receive an athletic scholarship during their first year of enrollment and may practice with the team but may not compete. A PSA certified as an academic redshirt must pass either eight quarter or semester hours in order to practice during the next term.

Celebratory Standardized Signing Form — This NCAA provided nonbinding form is used by a Division III institution after a college-bound student-athlete has been accepted for enrollment.

Contact — A contact occurs any time a coach has any face-to-face encounter with a PSA or their parents off the college's campus during which time anything more than "hello" is said. A contact is also considered to have occurred if a coach has any contact with a PSA or their parents at the PSA's high school or at any location where the PSA is competing or practicing.

Contact Period — The period of time when it is permissible for authorized athletic department staff members to have face-to-face contact with PSAs, their parents, relatives, or legal guardians off the institution's campus. Athletic department staff members may be involved in off-campus activities designed to assess the academic qualifications or athletic ability of the PSA.

Core Course — A recognized academic course that offers fundamental instruction in a specific area of study.

Dead Period — The period of time when it is not permissible to make face-to-face, in-person recruiting contacts or evaluations on or off the institution's campus or to permit official or unofficial visits. It is permissible for an institutional staff member to write or telephone PSAs. Dead periods for field hockey surround the NCAA Division I Championship (November) and the Division I National Letter of Intent signing date (February), see the recruiting rules summary.

Early Academic Qualifier — An academic qualification term applied a PSA who meets specific criteria after completing six semesters of high school. A PSA must earn a minimum SAT combined score of 1000 (Math and Critical Reading) or a minimum ACT sum score of 85, and earn a minimum core-course GPA of 3.0 in a minimum of 12 core courses (three years of English, two years of math, two years of science, and five additional core courses).

Early Action — Provides the applicant with an awareness of their admissions candidacy to a particular institution but in most cases is not a binding commitment to attend the institution as is Early Decision. Early Action deadlines and policies vary from institution to institution.

Early Decision — An admissions decision given prior to an institution's regular date of admission. In most cases, the decision to apply Early Decision is a binding commitment for that institution should acceptance be offered. Early Decision deadlines and policies vary from institution to institution.

Evaluation Period — The period of time when it is permissible for authorized athletic department staff members to be involved in off-campus activities designed to assess the academic qualifications and playing ability of PSAs. Athletic department staff members may not have face-to-face contact with PSAs, their parents, relatives, or legal guardians off the institution's campus.

Financial Aid — Funds provided to a student-athlete from various sources to pay or assist in the paying of the cost of education. Examples of institutional financial aid include scholarships, grants, tuition waivers, employee dependent tuition benefits, loans, and federal work-study employment programs.

Five-Year Clock — In Division I, a student-athlete has five calendar years in which to complete their four seasons of competition. This five-year period or "clock" begins when a student-athlete first enrolls full-time in any collegiate institution. This clock does not stop except under special circumstances. If a student-athlete attended college for one year as a full-time student and then stayed out of school for two years to work, the student would have two years remaining on her clock at a Division I school.

Grayshirt — A grayshirt is a term applied to a student-athlete why they delay their enrollment at her future college or university so that their eligibility clock will not start until they arrive on campus during the second semester of their freshman year. Grayshirts do not get to practice or workout with the team.

Key Recruiting Terms

Hardship Waiver — A hardship waiver permits a student-athlete to be granted an additional year of competition if that student has, within one of their four seasons of intercollegiate competition, suffered an incapacitating injury or illness that prevents them from completing that season, providing that specific conditions are met.

National Letter of Intent — The official document administered by the Collegiate Commissioners Association and utilized by NCAA member institutions to establish the commitment of a PSA to attend a particular institution.

NCAA Eligibility Center — A central clearinghouse that certifies the athletic and amateur credentials for student-athletes who wish to complete athletically at a Division I or Division II institution.

Nonqualifier — An academic qualification term applied to a PSA. If they are labeled as a nonqualifier, the PSA will not be able to practice, receive an athletic scholarship, or compete during their first year of enrollment.

Nontraditional Course — A nontraditional course is a course that is taught through the internet, distance learning, independent study, individualized instruction, correspondence, computer software programs or other similar manners.

Official Visit — A visit financed in whole or in part by an institution, or in Division III, by a representative of the institution's athletic interests.

Partial Qualifier — A Division II academic qualification term applied to a PSA. To be a partial qualifier, the PSA must graduate from high school, complete 16 core courses, earn a minimum GPA of 2.0 in these core courses, and earn an SAT combined score or an ACT sum score that matches their core-course GPA on the sliding scale. A PSA may practice and receive an athletic scholarship but may not compete during their first year of enrollment.

Prospective Student-Athlete — One becomes a prospective student-athlete when they start ninth grade classes. Before the ninth grade, one becomes a prospective student-athlete if a college gives you (or your relatives or friends) any financial aid or other benefits that the college does not generally provide to prospective students. Commonly referred to as a "PSA."

Qualifier — An academic qualification term applied to a PSA. If a PSA is a qualifier, they may practice, compete, and receive athletic scholarships during their first year of enrollment.

Quiet Period — That period of time when it is permissible to have face-to-face recruiting contact with prospective student-athletes, their parents, relatives, or legal guardians only on the institution's campus. No off-campus recruiting contacts or evaluations may be made during a quiet period.

Recruited Prospective Student-Athlete — One becomes a recruited prospective student-athlete at a particular college/university if any coach or representative of the college's athletic interests approaches you about enrolling and participating in athletics at that college/university. Activities that cause you to become a recruited prospective student-athlete include providing you with an official visit, placing more than one telephone call to you or any member of your family, or visiting you or any member of your family anywhere other than the college/university campus.

Recruiting Calendar — Visit [NCAA .org](http://NCAA.org) to view field hockey's current recruiting calendar.

Redshirt — A term used to define a student-athlete who does not participate in competition in a sport for an entire academic year. A student-athlete who does not compete in a sport the entire academic year has not used a season of competition. For example, a Division I qualifier who practices with her team but does not compete against outside competition during her freshman year would still have the next four years to play four seasons of competition.

Telephone Calls — A Division I coach may call a PSA one time per week beginning on or after August 1 preceding the PSA's junior year. A Division II coach may call a PSA an unlimited amount of times on or after June 15 before the PSA's senior year. A Division III coach may call a PSA an unlimited number of times per week.

Key Recruiting Terms

Ten-Semester/15-Quarter Clock — In Division II and Division III, a student-athlete has ten semesters or fifteen quarters of full-time enrollment in which to participate in a maximum of four seasons of competition. A semester or quarter is used any time a student-athlete attends a class as a full-time or part-time student and competes for the school. A student-athlete who attends a school on a part-time basis and does not compete or does not enroll for a term, does not use a term.

Unofficial Visit — A visit made at the PSA's own expense.

Verbal Commitment — An oral commitment to attend an institution given by the PSA prior to the signing date of the National Letter of Intent. While not a binding commitment, the NFHCA encourages coaches and PSAs to honor verbal commitments.

Walk-On — A walk-on is a student-athlete who is not typically recruited to participate in a sport at a given school and who does not receive an athletic scholarship but who participates as a member of a team.

Written Offer of Aid — An institution or coach may not provide a PSA with a written offer of athletically related aid prior to August 1 of the PSA's senior year. An institution or coach may provide a written offer on or after August 1 of the PSA's senior year, however, the institution or coach may not permit the PSA to sign a form indicating her acceptance of the offer before the initial NLI signing date.