

COLLEGE RECRUITING TIMELINE

To be realistic about what level of soccer you are qualified for can sometimes be a daunting task. Most student-athletes want to play Division I soccer, but only .019% have the opportunity to do so and an even smaller percentage have the opportunity to be a starter or see vital minutes. An easy way to see what level is best for you is to pay attention to the contacts you are receiving. Recruiting begins freshman year, as that is when coaches at every level can begin to contact you in some form. Follow this timeline to get an idea of where you fit in. If coaches are not coming to you, you will have to work twice as hard to get noticed by them.

Freshman year – Top Division I prospects start getting evaluated by Division I programs their freshman year; it starts that early. Even though those coaches can't contact you with personalized emails or phone calls yet, they will be watching you at tournaments and will send you camp invitations, questionnaires or general information on the school. For Division II, III and NAIA schools, they may be sending you questionnaires and camp invitations as well, but it's still a little too early for a lot of schools at these levels to be looking at potential recruits.

Sophomore year - You can still only receive this type of general information from all levels, but if you are a top prospect you should notice an increase in the amount. For top Division I programs, sophomore year is their biggest year for evaluation. Coaches will be attending the major tournaments throughout the country and solid Division I athletes will be evaluated and identified during this time.

Junior year - Division I prospects should be receiving personalized emails or letters from Division I coaches after September 1st. Solid prospects will be invited to campus on unofficial visits and most Division I recruits will have made their verbal commitments by the end of their junior year. Even though it may seem early, you need to be aware that this is how it works and in most cases, the higher the division, the earlier they will finish up with their recruiting. It's done this way because coaches know if they don't move fast, the top athletes will choose other schools and their opponents will be stronger.

For Division II, III and NAIA prospects, you will be receiving personalized emails, letters and camp invitations as well. Some schools might be inviting you to campus on unofficial visits, but it will depend on the school and program.

Senior year - Solid Division I recruits will start receiving phone calls on and after July 1st. These recruits have most likely already visited the campus and met the coach, but they will go back to campus on an official visit after the first day of classes their senior year. In many cases, they have already made a verbal commitment, but if they haven't yet, they will commit during fall of senior year. They will receive phone calls from the coach fairly often throughout the year just to check in. If offered an athletic scholarship, they will sign the National Letter of Intent on the initial signing date in early February.

Division II coaches can begin calling their prospects starting June 15th before senior year. Prospects will be invited to campus for an official or unofficial visit in the fall to meet the coach and players; offers are usually extended at this time. Most Division II schools, like Division I coaches, would like to get their recruiting done early in an attempt to obtain the highest caliber athletes.

Technically, Division III and NAIA coaches can call at any point, but most of these coaches start making phone calls on July 1st of senior year. If the recruit has been in contact via email and has been evaluated prior to this date, they will most likely receive phone calls if they are a top Recruit. Commitments can happen at any point during senior year and can go into summer after senior year.

This timeline isn't set in stone, but it is generally how the process works. If you have reached out to coaches the right way but still aren't hearing from Division I schools in a personalized way by junior year, then that level probably isn't the best fit for you and it would be wise to look at some other levels. There are many great opportunities at Division II, III and NAIA schools; you just have to be willing to look! If you are hearing from mostly Division III coaches, that is most likely the level that would be best for you athletically. Pay attention to the signs to help you stay realistic with regard to where you fit in with college soccer; it will make the process much easier on you.