



# ATHLETIC ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Academic eligibility is the least favorite recruiting topic, but it's one of the most important parts of the process. Some of the best athletes have had to forfeit their ability to compete in college because they weren't academically eligible. You should start thinking about your academic eligibility when you are going into your freshman year of high school, especially if you're interested in being an NCAA athlete. By focusing on your eligibility early, you can ensure that you're on track to complete all core courses in time and you are maintaining the grade point average (GPA) requirements.

We've outlined the main eligibility requirements you need to meet to be eligible for NCAA, NAIA and JUCO schools. The best way to approach eligibility is to first set academic goals for yourself based on the requirements of the schools on your target list. Then, stay on track to meet the academic requirements. If you're struggling to stay caught up academically, review the standards for the specific schools you're targeting to ensure you remain eligible.

Insider tip: Just because you meet the minimum academic eligibility requirements to compete at that division level, doesn't mean you meet a school's entrance requirements. For example, if you're interested in a school that requires all students to have at least a 3.0 GPA and 25 ACT, then you need to consider if you qualify when you're creating your list of target schools.

[For the complete breakdown of NCAA eligibility requirements, download the NCAA Eligibility Checklist.](#)

## How to become NCAA eligible?

If you're getting recruited by NCAA Division I or Division II schools, you'll need to create an NCAA Certification Account. Through this account, the NCAA will assess your NCAA eligibility. The Certification Account is \$80 for athletes in the U.S., U.S. territories and Canada. For international athletes, the cost is \$135. If you are unable to pay this fee, the NCAA does have fee waiver options available.

## Here are the main components that determine Division I and Division II NCAA eligibility:

**Core Course Requirement**—All athletes are required to *pass 16 core courses* in high school. There are a specific number of English, math, natural/physical science, and social science classes that every athlete needs to take, and each high school has a list of approved NCAA Core Courses. Talk to your counselor to ensure that your classes meet the core course requirement. While there is a



slight variation in the requirements for Division I and Division II schools. If you meet the Division I core course requirements, you will also be eligible at the Division II level. You also must complete 10 of your core courses by the end of your junior year. Ask your school counselor for a full list of the NCAA Core Course requirements.

**Core Course GPA**—Determine if your GPA meets the NCAA eligibility requirements. The NCAA **ONLY** looks at the GPA for core courses! You really can't afford to fail a core course. The core course GPA minimum is 2.3 on a 4.0 scale. For Division II, the minimum is a 2.0. The NCAA provides a core course worksheet, but you should also meet with your school counselor to learn more about how to determine your core course GPA.

**ACT/SAT Scores**—Generally speaking, the minimum ACT score for Division I NCAA eligibility is a 25 sum score, while the minimum SAT is a 900. Division II NCAA eligibility, requires an 840 SAT or a 20 ACT. The NCAA defines the sum score as the combined scores of the following four sections: English, mathematics, reading and science. *You can take the ACT multiple times and use your best score in each category to create a "super" sum score.*

**NCAA Sliding Scale**—The NCAA uses a combination of your GPA, SAT or ACT scores in determining eligibility. Athletes with a lower GPA can still be NCAA eligible if they meet the ACT/SAT score requirement outlined on the sliding scale. Learn more about the sliding scale and get a sense for what GPA and test scores you will need.

Division III schools are responsible for setting their own academic eligibility rules. If you are going to a DIII school, there is no reason to create a Certification Account with the NCAA, as they will not be reviewing your academic eligibility. If you are unsure what division level you will be competing at, start with a free NCAA Profile Page and you can easily transition to a Certification Account later if necessary.

## **Are Ivy League or Top-50 colleges on your target list?**

CollegeAdvisor.com offers 1-on-1 guidance from admissions experts to strengthen your college applications and boost your chances of admission.

### **Your path to NAIA eligibility**

NAIA eligibility is much more straightforward than NCAA Division I or Division II eligibility.

**There are two main requirements every future NAIA athlete must meet:**

- You must be a graduate of an accredited high school
- You must be accepted as a regular student in good standing. In other words, you need to meet the regular entrance requirements of the NAIA school.

**In addition to these requirements, you must meet two of the three following criteria:**



- A minimum ACT score of an 18 or an SAT score of an 860 (only in critical reading and math sections)
- A high school GPA of at least 2.0 on a 4.0 scale
- Rank in the top 50% of your graduating class

*For the NAIA to check your eligibility, you need to register by creating a Student-Athlete Profile within the NAIA Eligibility Center.*

### **Junior college eligibility requirements**

Junior colleges simply require that a student-athlete be a high school graduate, earning an approved standard academic diploma. Student-athletes can also be eligible if they've completed an approved high school equivalency test. Learn more about junior college eligibility on their website.

Many athletes who aren't able to meet the NCAA or NAIA eligibility requirements will gain eligibility by competing at a junior college for two years. Athletes who unsure of their major, will find attending a junior college invaluable while they decide what their four-year course of study will be.

