

THE EARLY START CHECKLIST

For 8th, 9th, and 10th graders. Most families wait until junior year and lose two years of runway. Here's what to do before then.

8TH GRADE Build the athlete, not the profile

- ☐ Play more than one sport. Coaches value athletes, not specialists
- ☐ Learn the rules: **D1, D2, D3, NAIA, JUCO** are all college options
- ☐ Start good study habits now. High school grades start counting in 9th
- ☐ Build strength, speed, and coordination the right way for their age
- ☐ Go to a local camp for fun and reps, not exposure
- ☐ Don't pay for a recruiting service yet. There's nothing to promote

9TH GRADE Grades and first film

- ☐ Protect the GPA from day one. Core-course grades follow them for 4 years
- ☐ Save every game video, even freshman or JV. You can cut film from it later
- ☐ Set up an X account with name, grad year, position, school, and height/weight
- ☐ Ask your counselor which classes count toward college eligibility
- ☐ Record real measurables: height, weight, and a timed sprint
- ☐ Clean up social media. Coaches look, and so do their staff

10TH GRADE Get seen on purpose

- ☐ Cut a highlight reel: 15 to 20 best plays, jersey easy to spot
- ☐ Build a target list of 20 to 30 schools across every level
- ☐ Go to position-specific camps at schools on your list
- ☐ Post film where a coach can find it in one click
- ☐ Email coaches yourself. Athletes can reach out at any time
- ☐ Update measurables every season, and keep receipts for stats

WHEN COACHES CAN CONTACT YOU

For most D1 sports, coaches can start contacting athletes on **June 15 after sophomore year** or **September 1 of junior year**. D2 starts earlier, and D3 and NAIA have far fewer limits. Rules differ by sport, so check yours.

WHAT YOU CAN DO ANY TIME

There is **no rule stopping an athlete from contacting a college coach**, at any age. Early emails may get a camp invite or a questionnaire back. That still puts you on their radar.

THE ONE THING PARENTS GET WRONG

Waiting for someone to find your kid. Talent alone doesn't get athletes recruited. Coaches recruit the athletes they know about, and the families who start early are the ones running a plan while everyone else is scrambling senior year.