

RECRUITING GLOSSARY

Clearinghouse: The NCAA Initial-Eligibility Clearinghouse is an organization that works with the NCAA to determine students' eligibility for athletics participation in their first year of college enrollment. Students who want to participate in college sports during their first year of enrollment in college must register with the Clearinghouse. Located in Iowa City, Iowa, the Clearinghouse staff follows NCAA bylaws and regulations in analyzing and processing a student's high school academic records, ACT or SAT scores, and key information about amateurism participation. It is up to the Clearinghouse to determine the student's initial eligibility.

Commitment: Also known as an oral commitment or verbal commitment. A recruit's pledge to the coaching staff that he intends to accept their scholarship offer and attend a specific institution. The pledge is non-binding until a National Letter-of-Intent is signed. If a prospect breaks off a commitment with one school to commit to another, it is called a de-commitment.

- **Silent commitment:** A commitment made to the coaching staff of a specific school but not made public.
- **Soft commitment:** A commitment in which the recruit will continue to take official visits to other schools.

Eligibility: Student-athletes receiving an athletic scholarship must graduate from high school, complete 14 core courses (ex. English, math, science), earn a minimum required grade-point average in core courses, and earn a combined SAT or ACT sum score that matches his core-course grade-point average and test score sliding scale (for example, a 2.4 core-course grade-point average needs a 860 SAT); [click here for more](#) on the sliding scale.

- **Qualifier:** A student-athlete who meets the academic requirements listed above. A qualifier can practice or compete for a college or university during his first year of college, can receive an athletics scholarship during his first year of college, and can play four seasons in his sport if he maintains eligibility from year to year.
- **Non-qualifier:** Non-qualifiers do not meet the academic requirements listed above. Non-qualifiers cannot practice or compete for their college or university during their first year of college. They cannot receive an athletics scholarship during their first year of college, but they may receive need-based financial aid. They can play only three seasons in their sport if they maintain eligibility from year to year (to earn a fourth season they must complete at least 80 percent of their degree before beginning their fifth year of college).

Grayshirt: A term used in the recruiting process to describe situations in which a student-athlete delays initial enrollment in a collegiate institution to the winter or spring term after the traditional academic year begins. Students who grayshirt often use the fall to take classes part time or choose not to enroll in college at all.

National Signing Day: The first day prospective student-athletes can sign a national letter of intent (see below). For high school football athletes, Signing Day falls on the first Wednesday of February. There is a separate signing day for midseason transfers (junior college transfers) in December.

National Letter of Intent: (Sometimes abbreviated as NLI or LOI) A binding agreement between a prospective student-athlete and an institution in which the institution agrees to provide a prospective student-athlete who is admitted to the institution and is eligible for financial aid under NCAA rules athletics aid for one academic year in exchange for the prospect's agreement to attend the institution for one academic year. All colleges and universities that participate in the NLI program agree not to recruit a prospective student-athlete once he/she signs an NLI with another college or university. Therefore, a prospective student-athlete who signs an NLI should no longer receive recruiting contacts and calls and is ensured an athletic scholarship for one academic year. The NLI must be accompanied by an institutional financial aid agreement. College coaches are not permitted to comment publicly about prospects until they sign a letter of intent.

- [Click here for more on the Letter of Intent.](#)

Prep school/Military academy: If a prospect does not graduate from high school in four years he can enroll in a fifth year of high school at a preparatory school or military academy. The prospect's high school GPA is locked and can only be improved by retaking courses. A prospect does not lose college eligibility while competing for a prep school or military academy but will be considered a non- or partial-qualifier when enrolling at an NCAA institution.

Prospective student-athlete: A student-athlete becomes a prospective student-athlete when he starts ninth-grade classes; or if before the student-athlete's ninth-grade year, a college gives the athlete, his relatives or his friends any financial aid or other benefits that the college does not provide to students generally.

Recruit: A prospective student-athlete is considered a recruit when he is provided with an official visit, having arranged, in-person, off-campus contact with a coach, receiving telephone contact from a coach more than once, or is issued a National Letter of Intent from the institution.

Recruiting calendar: College coaches are limited at times during the year in how often and in what way they may contact or evaluate prospects.

- **Contact period:** During this time, a college coach may have in-person contact with prospects and/or their parents on or off the college's campus. The coach may also visit the prospect's high school or watch the prospect compete. Prospects and their parents may visit a college campus, and the coach may write and telephone the prospect during this period.

- **Dead period:** The college coach may not have any in-person contact with the prospects or his parents at any time in the dead period.

- **Evaluation period:** The college coach may watch the prospect play or visit his high school, but cannot have any in-person conversations with the prospect or his parents off the college's campus. Prospects can visit a college campus during this period. Coaches are limited to three evaluations per prospect during the academic year. Evaluations include games and practices.

- **Quiet period:** The college coach may not have any in-person contact with the prospect or his parents off the college's campus. The coach may not watch him play or visit his high school during this period.

Visits: Prospects' visits to a college campus are divided into official and unofficial visits.

- **Official visit:** Any visit to a college campus by a prospect and his parents paid for by the college. The college may pay for transportation to the campus, a room and three meals per day, "reasonable" entertainment expenses. Prospects can make up to five official visits to different campuses.

- **Unofficial visit:** Any visit by a prospect and his parents to a college campus paid for by the prospect or his family. The only expense a prospect may receive from the college is three complimentary admissions to a home athletics contest. Prospects can take an unlimited amount of unofficial visits at any time. The only time prospects cannot talk with a coach during an unofficial visit is during a dead period.

Scholarship offer: A four-year institution can offer financial aid to a prospective student-athlete. These offers can be either verbal or written, however, only prospects receiving written offers can sign a National Letter of Intent or commit to an institution. An institution can offer an unlimited amount of scholarships but can provide only 85 full scholarships during a given academic year.

Walk-on: Any athlete who participates on an athletic team without an athletic scholarship is considered a walk-on. Walk-ons are not permitted to sign a National Letter of Intent. A "preferred walk-on" is assured a spot on the team, but the athlete is not offered a scholarship.