

## If You Want to Play Your Sport in College

**If you want a college where you can join the team, there's good news. Many colleges offer sport programs at every level.**

If you want to play in college because you enjoy it, your chances of finding a team are good. But if you want to play at a more competitive level, you'll need to work harder to find a fit.

### At What Level Do You Want to Play?

How skilled are you at the sport? And how much time do you want to commit to it? Your answers will lead you to one of three levels of collegiate sports:

1. **Intramural sports** are open to all students in a college. Teams play each other. This level makes sense if you are a beginner or just want to play for fun and meet people.
2. **Club sports** organize teams that play other colleges in the area. If you are a skilled player and enjoy competing and travelling, a club team might be perfect.
3. **Varsity sports** are run by sports organizations such as the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). If you are playing at the top of your game and are willing to commit serious time, a nationally ranked team might be your goal.

If you want to play at the intramural or club level, you could make sport participation a "tie-breaker" college quality. If you want to play at a varsity level, you have much more to consider.

### If You Want to Play at the College Varsity Level

The NCAA regulates most college varsity sports competition, recruiting, and athletic scholarships. Colleges belong to one of three NCAA Divisions, ranging from most competitive to least. About 300 small colleges belong to the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) which runs national championships in 13 sports.

- **The NCAA sets the rules.** For colleges in the NCAA, student athlete and recruiting requirements are spelled out in the NCAA's [Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete](#). It is available free on the NCAA website or from your high school counselor. It includes minimum academic standards and directions for registering with the NCAA.
- **Demands are fierce.** Travel to other colleges—even distant colleges—is part of the picture. Team practice also requires serious time. It will take a lot of stamina and organization to juggle the multiple demands of sports and study.
- **Show initiative to get on the team.** NCAA coaches, by and large, expect the student athlete to contact them. So stop by the coach's office during your campus visits to drop off your sports bio and clips. You can also invite them to see your bio and videos if you have posted them online.

### Scoring Sports Scholarships

Many high school athletes dream of being rewarded for their talents with a college sports scholarship.

While there may be serious money available for players on the college teams you see on TV, most college athletes get modest awards, if any.

### What's Next?

- Use [College Match](#) to search for colleges offering specific varsity and club sports.
- See [How to Qualify for Athletic Scholarships](#) to understand the process for winning sports scholarships.



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