



Eligibility Center



2015-16 GUIDE FOR  
**— FOUR-YEAR TRANSFERS**  
FOR STUDENT-ATHLETES AT FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## **3** What Should I Think About Before Transferring?

The introduction provides general information about the transfer process.

## **4** Focus on Your Degree

The likelihood of a college athlete becoming a professional athlete is low; see the numbers.

### **Learn as Much as You Can**

Some of the key points and persons in the transfer process are identified.

## **5** Transfer Checklist

Track the things you need to do and the questions you need to ask to ensure a successful transfer experience.

## **6** How Do the Transfer Rules Apply to Me?

Follow a step-by-step walkthrough of the NCAA transfer process.

## **13** When Can I Play?

Review the rules regarding when transfers actually can compete for their new schools.

## **14** Transfer Exceptions

Certain exceptions could allow you to practice, compete and receive an athletics scholarship during your first year at your new school.

## **16** Continuing Eligibility

The length of time you may compete for an NCAA school will be based in part on continuing eligibility rules.

## **17** Important Definitions

Learn some key definitions about the transfer process.

## **20** Where to Find More Information

Find a list of websites and addresses that will aid you in your transfer process.



## What Should I Think About Before Transferring?

Student-athlete success on the field, in the classroom and in life is at the heart of the NCAA's mission. Your college experience should give you the opportunity to receive a quality education and take your place among the student-athletes who have attended college, played sports, received their degrees and gone on to make important contributions to society.

NCAA transfer rules are designed to help student-athletes such as you make sensible decisions about the best place to earn a degree and develop athletic skills. The decision to transfer to another school involves important and sometimes difficult choices. Make sure you understand the rules, the options and the potential consequences of your decision. You do not want to risk your education or your chance to play NCAA sports.

## FOCUS ON YOUR DEGREE

More than 460,000 student-athletes compete in NCAA sports but few move on to compete at the professional or Olympic level. For the rest, the experiences of college sports and the life lessons they learn along the way will help them as they pursue careers in other fields.

Professional opportunities are extremely limited and the likelihood of a college athlete becoming a professional athlete is low. The likelihood of an NCAA student-athlete earning a college degree is much greater: graduation success rates are 84 percent in Division I, 72 percent in Division II and 87 percent in Division III.

### Percentage of college athletes who become professional athletes

	NCAA Student-Athletes	Approximate No. Draft Eligible	No. Draft Slots	No. Drafted	% NCAA to Major Pro*
Football	71,291	15,842	256	255	1.6%
Men's Basketball	18,320	4,071	60	47	1.2%
Women's Basketball	16,319	3,626	36	32	0.9%
Baseball	33,431	7,429	1,216	638	8.6%
Men's Ice Hockey	3,976	884	211	60	6.8%
Men's Soccer	23,602	5,245	76	72	1.4%

\* Percent NCAA to Major Pro figures are based on the number of available draft slots in the NFL, NBA, WNBA, MLB, NHL and MLS drafts only.

## LEARN AS MUCH AS YOU CAN

If you decide to transfer, the NCAA wants to help your education and sports participation continue as smoothly as possible. But you have a responsibility as well: to learn as much as you can to protect your eligibility. While staff at the NCAA and its member schools can give you advice, you need to understand how transfer rules apply to you before you decide to move to a new school.

This guide introduces you to the key issues involved in transferring. But before you transfer, you may need more information. Key people, including your coach or compliance officer, can help you successfully work through the process. Take advantage of all the information available to you.

- Visit the NCAA website at [NCAA.org/transfer](https://www.ncaa.org/transfer) for FAQs and printable resources on key topics.
- Talk to people at your current school, including staff in the athletics department or compliance office.
- Get written permission from your current school to talk to staff in the athletics department or compliance office at the school you want to attend. Learn more about permission to contact on page 12.
- Call the conference of your new school.
- Call the NCAA at 317-917-6008, Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern time.

## TRANSFER CHECKLIST

### ADMISSIONS

- Have you applied to the admissions department at the school you are transferring to?
  - You may apply to the admissions department of your new school without notifying the athletics department at your current school.

### INITIAL ELIGIBILITY

- Have you registered with the NCAA Eligibility Center?
  - To play at a Division I or Division II school, you must register with the Eligibility Center at [eligibilitycenter.org](http://eligibilitycenter.org).
  - See page 12 for more information.

### CONTINUING ELIGIBILITY

- Do you have any remaining eligibility to compete in your sport after transferring?
  - Student-athletes have four seasons to compete in each sport.
  - See page 16 for more information.

### TRANSFER ELIGIBILITY

- In most cases, student-athletes who transfer to an NCAA school must sit out of competition for a year.
  - You may be able to compete immediately if you meet a transfer exception.
  - See pages 13 to 15 for more information.

### PERMISSION TO CONTACT

- Has the athletics department at your current school given you permission to contact your new school?
  - Coaches and athletics staff at your new school may not talk to you about transferring until your current school sends your new school a permission-to-contact letter.
  - Ask the compliance office at your current school for a permission-to-contact letter.
  - See page 12 for more information.

### OTHER TRANSFER REQUIREMENTS

- Do you meet other transfer requirements?
  - If you have permission to contact your new school, ask its compliance office if you meet all transfer requirements for your new school and its conference.
  - See page 8 for more information.

## HOW DO THE TRANSFER RULES APPLY TO ME?

You may be wondering how soon you can compete after you transfer. Before you can answer that question, you need to follow these steps to understand how the transfer rules apply to your situation:

1. Determine if you are a transfer student-athlete
2. Decide where you are going
3. Understand your initial-eligibility status
4. Make sure you have registered with the NCAA Eligibility Center, if needed
5. Ask your current school for a permission-to-contact letter

### 1. DETERMINE IF YOU ARE A TRANSFER STUDENT-ATHLETE

To learn which transfer rules apply to your situation, you first need to determine whether your situation meets the common definition of a transfer. It may seem fairly simple, but you need to answer this basic question before you can continue.

#### How do I know if I am a transfer student-athlete?

Ask yourself if you have met any of the conditions – called transfer triggers – of a typical transfer situation:

1. Have you been a full-time student at a two-year or four-year college during a regular academic term? Classes taken during summer terms do not count.
2. Have you practiced with a college team?
3. Have you practiced or competed while enrolled as a part-time student?
4. Have you received athletically related financial aid from a college while attending summer school?

If you answered “yes” to any of those questions, you are a transfer student-athlete because you have met the conditions of a transfer trigger. Now you need to learn how to meet the transfer rules so you can play your sport at a new NCAA school.

If you answered “no” to all those questions, you probably are not a transfer student-athlete and the transfer rules do not apply to you. You may enroll at a new NCAA school and compete immediately.

## CASE STUDY

*Brady was recruited to play basketball at Wisteria Lane College, an NCAA school. He enrolled in classes as a full-time student and attended class on the first day of the semester.*

*On the fourth day of class, Brady went to the registrar's office and dropped from 12 credit hours to nine, making him a part-time student for the rest of the semester.*

*At the end of the semester, Brady decided that he wanted to go to Marcus University, another NCAA school.*

*Is Brady a transfer student-athlete?  
Yes.*

*The transfer rules applied to Brady the minute he became a full-time student and went to class on the first day of the semester. He must get a written permission-to-contact letter from Wisteria Lane's athletics director before he can speak to the coach at Marcus University.*



## 2. DECIDE WHERE YOU ARE GOING

Now that you know whether you are a transfer student-athlete, you need to decide which school you want to attend. As you think about new schools, keep in mind academics are just as important as athletics. Your new school should help you meet all your goals – on the field, in the classroom and in life.

Each NCAA school is part of a division and a conference, and has its own admission policies. Transfer rules are different for each NCAA division and may be more restrictive for some conferences.

### Learn more about your new school's division

As you research schools, take time to learn more about each NCAA division. Schools in Divisions I and II offer athletics scholarships to cover tuition, fees, room and board, and books. Division III schools do not award athletics scholarships but do offer financial aid based on academics or need.

#### Division I

Among the three NCAA divisions, Division I schools generally have the biggest student bodies, manage the largest athletics budgets and offer the most generous number of scholarships. Schools who are members of Division I commit to maintaining a high academic standard for student-athletes in addition to a wide range of opportunities for athletics participation.

With nearly 350 colleges and universities in its membership, Division I schools field more than 6,000 athletic teams, providing opportunities for more than 170,000 student-athletes to compete in NCAA sports each year.

Division I is subdivided based on football sponsorship. Schools that participate in bowl games belong to the Football Bowl Subdivision. Those that participate in the NCAA-run football championship belong to the Football Championship Subdivision. A third group doesn't sponsor football at all. The subdivisions apply only to football; all other sports are considered simply Division I.

#### Division II

Division II is a collection of 307 colleges and universities that provide thousands of student-athletes the opportunity to compete at a high level of scholarship athletics while excelling in the classroom and fully engaging in the broader campus experience. This balance, in which student-athletes are recognized for their academic success, athletics contributions, and campus and community involvement, is at the heart of the Division II philosophy.

The Division II approach provides growth opportunities through academic achievement, learning in high-level athletics competition and a focus on service to the community. The balance and integration of these different areas of learning provide Division II student-athletes with a path to graduation while cultivating a variety of skills and knowledge for life after college.

#### Division III

More than 170,000 student-athletes at 450 institutions make up Division III, the largest NCAA division both in number of participants and number of schools. The Division III experience offers participation in a competitive athletic environment that pushes student-athletes to excel on the field and build upon their potential by tackling new challenges across campus.

Academics are the primary focus for Division III student-athletes. The division minimizes the conflicts between athletics and academics, and helps student-athletes progress toward graduation through shorter practice and playing seasons and regional competition that reduces time away from academic studies. Participants are integrated on campus and treated like all other members of the student body, keeping them focused on being a student first.



### **Learn more about your new school's conference**

In some cases, conference transfer rules can be more restrictive than NCAA rules, so you need to have a clear picture before you make a move. For instance, conferences may differ on how long you must attend a new school before you may compete. See NCAA Conferences on page 20 for a link to conferences' websites or visit [NCAA.org](https://www.ncaa.org).

### **Learn more about your new school's admission policies**

Meeting the NCAA transfer rules does not guarantee you will be admitted to a new school. You also need to meet the school's admission requirements – including academic standards – before you can play NCAA sports.

- Visit [NCAA.org](https://www.ncaa.org) for a full list of NCAA schools, sorted by division, sport, and conference. You also will find a database to help you find the names, addresses and phone numbers for athletics contacts at each school.
- Once you get written permission to contact from your current school, talk to the school you are interested in attending to understand all you need to do to be admitted both academically and athletically. Talk to the staff in the admissions office, athletics department or athletics compliance office. Learn more about permission to contact on page 12.
- Contact the NCAA national office or the appropriate conference office for more information about your specific case.



### **3. UNDERSTAND YOUR INITIAL-ELIGIBILITY STATUS**

Once you know whether you are a transfer student-athlete and have identified the school you want to attend, you need to find out what your initial-eligibility status is for your new school.

#### **Why do I need to know my initial-eligibility status?**

In part, your initial-eligibility status determines which transfer rules apply to you and how many seasons of competition you may have remaining to play at your new school.

#### **What is initial-eligibility status?**

High school student-athletes who want to compete in NCAA sports during their first year at a Division I or II school need to meet certain division-wide academic standards. Your initial-eligibility status indicates whether you met the academic standards to compete in your first year at a Division I or II school.

If you registered with the NCAA Eligibility Center as a high school student and your first college enrollment was at a Division I or II school, the Eligibility Center assigned you an initial-eligibility status. The Eligibility Center determined your initial-eligibility status based on the core courses you took in high school, the grades and number of credits you earned in those courses and your scores on standardized tests. If you do not have an initial-eligibility status, talk to the compliance department at your new school.

There are three possible initial-eligibility statuses: qualifier (Divisions I and II), partial qualifier (Division II only) and nonqualifier (Divisions I and II).

- If you were eligible to practice, compete and receive an athletics scholarship during your first year at a Division I or II school, you were a qualifier.
- If you were not eligible to practice, compete and receive an athletics scholarship during your first year at a Division I or II school, you were a nonqualifier.
- If you attended a Division II school and you were eligible in your first year to practice and receive an athletics scholarship – but you were not eligible to compete – you were a partial qualifier. Only Division II schools use the partial-qualifier status.

Division III schools set their own admissions and eligibility standards. If your first college enrollment was at a Division III school, you were not assigned an initial-eligibility status by the Eligibility Center. If you are thinking of transferring to a Division III school, you need to meet the admission requirements of the school you plan to attend.

#### **How do I figure out my initial-eligibility status for my new school?**

Division I and Division II have different initial-eligibility standards so your initial-eligibility status may change if you are moving to a school in a different division. For instance, if you were a partial qualifier at a Division II school, your initial-eligibility status could change to nonqualifier if you transfer to a Division I school.

To determine your initial-eligibility status at your new school, ask yourself if you would have been eligible to compete at your new school had you chosen to go there as a freshman after graduating high school. Use the following academic standards for each division as a guide.

### **Division I Qualifier**

You had to meet all the following requirements to be a Division I qualifier, allowing you to practice, compete and receive an athletics scholarship during your first year:

- Complete 16 NCAA-approved core courses in high school:
  - Four years of English
  - Three years of math (Algebra I or higher)
  - Two years of natural/physical science (including one year of lab science if your high school offers it)
  - One additional year of English, math or natural/physical science
  - Two years of social science
  - Four additional years of English, math, natural/physical science, social science, foreign language, comparative religion or philosophy
- Earn at least a 2.0 GPA in core courses.
- Earn an SAT combined score or ACT sum score matching your core-course GPA on the Division I sliding scale, which balances test scores and core-course GPA.
- Graduate high school.

### **Division I Nonqualifier**

If you did not meet the Division I qualifier requirements, you were not eligible to practice, compete and receive an athletics scholarship during your first year at a Division I school.

### **Division II Qualifier**

You had to meet all the following requirements to be a Division II qualifier, allowing you to practice, compete and receive an athletics scholarship during your first year:

- Complete 16 NCAA-approved core courses in high school:
  - Three years of English.
  - Two years of math (Algebra I or higher).
  - Two years of natural or physical science (including one year of lab science if your high school offers it).
  - Three additional years of English, math or natural or physical science
  - Two years of social science
  - Four additional years of English, math, natural or physical science, social science, foreign language, comparative religion or philosophy
- Earn at least a 2.0 GPA in core courses.
- Earn an SAT combined score of 820 or an ACT sum score of 68.
- Graduate high school.





### **Division II Partial Qualifier**

If you graduated high school and met one of the following requirements, you were a Division II partial qualifier, allowing you to practice and receive an athletics scholarship during your first year, but not allowing you to compete:

- Earn a 2.0 GPA in 16 core courses:
  - Three years of English.
  - Two years of math (Algebra I or higher).
  - Two years of natural or physical science (including one year of lab science if your high school offers it).
  - Three additional years of English, math or natural or physical science
  - Two years of social science
  - Four additional years of English, math, natural or physical science, social science, foreign language, comparative religion or philosophy
- Earn an SAT combined score of 820 or an ACT sum score of 68.

### **Division II Nonqualifier**

If you did not meet the Division II qualifier or partial-qualifier requirements, you were not eligible to practice, receive an athletics scholarship or compete during your first year at a Division II school.

#### **4. MAKE SURE YOU HAVE REGISTERED WITH THE NCAA ELIGIBILITY CENTER**

By now you should know whether you are a transfer student-athlete, which school you want to attend and what your initial-eligibility status is. If you want to transfer to a Division I or II school and you have never registered with the Eligibility Center, you need to visit [eligibilitycenter.org](http://eligibilitycenter.org) to register before you continue the transfer process.

Division III schools set their own admissions and eligibility standards. If your first college enrollment was at a Division III school, you probably have not registered with the Eligibility Center. If you are transferring from a Division III school to a Division I or II school, you need to register with the Eligibility Center.

If you have not registered with the Eligibility Center, your initial-eligibility status is nonqualifier. Schools cannot assume that you would have been a qualifier or partial qualifier.

#### **5. ASK YOUR CURRENT SCHOOL FOR A PERMISSION-TO-CONTACT LETTER**

In most cases, you need permission from your current school for you or a family member to talk about transferring with a coach or athletics staff member at a new school. You must request permission to contact from your current school even if you do not compete at your current school. To receive permission to talk to your new school, the athletics director at your current school has to send a permission-to-contact letter to your new school. The compliance office at your current school can help you ask your athletics director to send the letter.

You may write to a new school to let them know you are interested in transferring but coaches and athletics staff at the new school cannot discuss transfer opportunities with you until they have received the permission-to-contact letter from your current school.

Requesting written permission to contact is different from requesting release from a team. Do not request release from your current team until you are sure you can transfer to your new school. Requesting release from your current team can affect any athletics scholarship you have at your current school.

#### **What if my current school does not provide a permission-to-contact letter?**

If your current school does not provide the permission-to-contact letter, your new school cannot contact you. You may still transfer to your new school, but you will not be eligible for an athletics scholarship until you have attended your new school for one academic year.

If staff members at your current school deny your request for a permission-to-contact letter, they must explain in writing how you can appeal their decision. If you appeal their decision, a panel of individuals from your current school who are not involved in athletics will conduct a hearing to decide the issue.

Do not talk to another school's coach until you know the rules about receiving written permission.

#### **Who needs to request a permission-to-contact letter?**

If you are a full-time student at an NCAA Division I or II school, or a National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) school, you need to request a permission-to-contact letter before talking to a new school about transferring. If you are not a full-time student at an NCAA Division I or II school, or an NAIA school, you do not need to request a permission-to-contact letter.

If you are a full-time student at an NCAA Division III school who wants to transfer to a different Division III school, you may issue your own permission-to-contact letter (called a self-release). The self-release is available only to student-athletes transferring from one Division III school to another Division III school. Learn more about the Division III self-release at [NCAA.org/transfer](http://NCAA.org/transfer).

#### **CASE STUDY**

*Rachel attended Halstead College in Division I as a freshman and practiced with the swimming and diving team. Before swimming in a meet, she was cut from the team.*

*After spending a summer at the beach, Rachel decided she wanted to transfer to a Division II school and join the swimming and diving team.*

*Does Rachel need to ask Halstead for a written permission-to-contact letter?*

*Yes.*

*Because Rachel practiced with the swim team at Halstead, she was considered a member of the team and a student-athlete, even though she never participated in a meet.*

#### **CASE STUDY**

*Nolan attended Stars Hollow University in Division III as a freshman and sophomore. Nolan practiced and competed on Stars Hollow's men's lacrosse team.*

*Before the start of his junior year, Nolan decided to transfer to another Division III school to pursue a degree not available at Stars Hollow.*

*Does Nolan need to ask Stars Hollow for a written permission-to-contact letter?*

*No.*

*Because Nolan is transferring from a Division III school to another Division III school, he may issue his own self-release to allow another Division III school to contact him about transferring.*

## WHEN CAN I PLAY?

Generally, you need to spend one academic year at your new school as a full-time student before you are eligible to compete. This time is called an academic year in residence and is designed to allow you to become comfortable in your new environment.

Requiring student-athletes to sit out of competition for a year after transferring encourages them to make decisions motivated by academics as well as athletics. Most student-athletes who are not eligible to compete immediately benefit from a year to adjust to their new school and focus on their classes. Student-athletes who must sit out for a year at their new school may practice with their new team and receive an athletics scholarship if they were academically eligible when they left their previous school.

For your academic year in residence to count, you must attend classes only at the school where you plan to compete and you must be a full-time student (generally at least 12 credit hours). You cannot meet this requirement by attending your new school part time or by not attending school at all. Each school determines its own full-time status, so check with the compliance department at your new school to find out how many credit hours you need to take.

For a semester or quarter to count toward your academic year in residence, you must enroll before the 12th day of class.

### Are there any exceptions?

There are a number of transfer exceptions that could allow you to practice, compete or receive an athletics scholarship during your first year at your new school. Remember, other school or conference rules also may affect your timeline.

### How do I find out if I qualify for an exception?

Once you have a written permission-to-contact letter from your current school, talk to the compliance staff at your new school about whether you qualify for a transfer exception. Your new school will decide if you qualify for a transfer exception.

### Basic restrictions for transfer exceptions

There are several basic restrictions for transfer exceptions:

- If you were a partial qualifier or a nonqualifier during your first year, you must spend at least one academic year in residence before you can use a transfer exception. Learn more about your initial-eligibility status on pages 9 and 10.
- If you signed a National Letter of Intent (NLI) and transfer during your first year as a full-time college student, you may not be able to compete at your new school for a certain period of time. Learn more about the NLI on page 16.
- You may not use an exception if you are completing a year of residence at your current school.
- If you are a baseball or basketball student-athlete and transfer to a Division I school at the start of winter or spring term, you will not be eligible to compete until the next fall term.
- If you are a tennis student-athlete transferring to a Division I school at the start of winter or spring term and you have competed or received an athletics scholarship from your current school during the same academic year, you will not be eligible to compete until the next fall term.

## CASE STUDY

*Kyle transferred to CBB College before the beginning of the school year and is sitting out a year. He completed 12 credit hours in the fall term and 12 credit hours in the spring term. At CBB, students who take 12 credit hours are considered full-time students.*

*Did Kyle complete his academic year in residence?*

*Yes. Since Kyle completed two full-time semesters (12 + 12), he satisfied the full-time requirement for the year.*

## CASE STUDY

*Megan transferred to Gatsby College and is sitting out a year. At Gatsby, students with 12 credit hours are considered full-time students.*

*Megan completed 12 hours in the fall term at Gatsby. In the spring, she enrolled for nine hours and was considered a part-time student.*

*Did Megan complete her academic year in residence?*

*No. Megan did not complete two semesters as a full-time student. She must still complete a second semester as a full-time student before she has fulfilled her academic year in residence.*

## **TRANSFER EXCEPTIONS FOR DIVISIONS I AND II SCHOOLS**

If you transfer from a four-year school to an NCAA Division I or II school, you may use an exception to compete immediately if you meet one of the following conditions:

1. This is your first transfer
2. You return to your first school without participating in sports at the second school
3. Your sport is dropped or is not sponsored at your current school
4. You never have been recruited
5. You have not participated in your sport for two years

### **1. This is your first transfer**

If you have never transferred from a four-year school and do not compete in Division I baseball, basketball and men's ice hockey, you may use a one-time exception to compete immediately at a Division I or II school.

To qualify for this exception, you must meet all the following conditions:

- You are in good academic standing and are making progress toward your degree at your current school.
- You would have been considered academically eligible to compete had you stayed at your current school.
- You have a written release agreement from your current school stating it does not object to you receiving a transfer exception.

If your current school is not willing to provide you a release agreement, you may be entitled to a hearing by a committee at your school that is not involved in athletics, such as the office of student affairs, the office of the dean of students or a committee comprised of the faculty athletics representative, student-athletes and nonathletics faculty or staff members. If you attend a Division I school and your request for a written release is not provided within seven business days after you request it, your current school is required to provide you a written release.

If you are a Division I baseball, basketball and men's ice hockey student-athlete, you may not use the one-time transfer exception. If you are a Division I football student-athlete, you may use the one-time transfer exception only if you meet one of the following conditions:

- You are transferring from a Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) school to a Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) school and you have two seasons of competition eligibility remaining.
- You are transferring from an FCS school that offers athletics scholarships to an FCS school that does not offer athletics scholarships.
- You were not recruited by your first school and you never have received an athletics scholarship.

### **2. You return to your first school without participating in sports at the second school**

If you participate in sports at a Division I or II school, enroll at a second school and then return to the first school, you may use an exception to compete immediately at the first school if you did not practice or compete at the second school.

### 3. Your sport is dropped or is not sponsored at your current school

If your current school drops your sport, or if it did not sponsor your sport while you were a student, you may use an exception to compete immediately after transferring to a Division I or II school.

You may use this exception only if you transfer after your current school publicly announces it will drop your sport.

### 4. You have never been recruited

If you have not been recruited by the Division I or II school you plan to attend, you may use an exception to compete immediately if you meet the following conditions:

- You have not received an athletics scholarship.
- You have not practiced for more than 14 consecutive days or competed in intercollegiate sports.
- You have been recruited if a college coach calls you more than once, contacts you off campus, pays your expenses to visit the campus or, in Divisions I and II, issues you a National Letter of Intent or a written offer of financial aid.

Your current school can tell you more about your recruiting status.

### 5. You have not participated in your sport for two years

If you have not participated in your sport for two years, you may use an exception to compete immediately if you meet one of the following conditions:

- You have not practiced for more than 14 consecutive days or competed with an NCAA team for two years before practicing or competing with your new school.
- You did not practice or compete in noncollegiate amateur competition for two years while you were a full-time student.

### Transfer exceptions for Division III schools

If you transfer from a four-year school to an NCAA Division III school, you may use an exception to compete immediately if you have not practiced or competed in intercollegiate sports. If you participated in intercollegiate sports at your current school, you may use an exception only if you would have been both academically and athletically eligible had you stayed at your current school.

If your current school did not sponsor your sport while you were a student, you may use an exception to compete immediately if you completed 24-semester or 36-quarter transferable-degree credit hours and attended your current school for at least two full-time semesters or three full-time quarters. Summer school does not count.

## CASE STUDY

*Billy is a nonqualifier. He attended a four-year college for one year and played football. His GPA was 1.987, which did not meet that school's requirement to be eligible for the next year. So, Billy transferred to Ceylon University, a Division II school.*

*Is Billy eligible to play right away?*

*No.*

*Billy is eligible to use the transfer exceptions since he completed an academic year, but he does not meet the requirements for any of the exceptions. He cannot use the one-time transfer exception because he was not in good academic standing at the previous four-year school and would not have been eligible to compete had he remained at the first school. Before he can play, Billy must spend one academic year in residence at Ceylon University.*

## CASE STUDY

*Dauber, a qualifier, is a freshman soccer player who attends Cabrillo College, a Division I school. He just finished the fall semester and played in only one game. Dauber's coach is unhappy with his ability, so Dauber wants to transfer to Richardo College, another Division I school.*

*Can Dauber use a transfer exception?*

*Yes.*

*Because Dauber is a qualifier, he can use an exception. Because this is the first time he has transferred, he may be able to use the one-time transfer exception. If he is in good academic standing and Cabrillo does not object, Dauber can use the one-time transfer exception.*



## CONTINUING ELIGIBILITY

While initial eligibility rules affect your first year at a Division I or Division II school, continuing eligibility rules determine how long you may compete. If you are transferring to an NCAA school, the length of time you may compete for that school will be based in part on continuing eligibility rules.

If you compete at a Division I school, you have five calendar years to play four seasons of competition. Your five-year clock starts when you enroll as a full-time student at any two-year or four-year school and does not stop until five years have passed. Your clock continues to tick down, even if you spend an academic year in residence as a result of transferring, if you red shirt, if you do not attend school or even if you enroll part time during your college career.

If you compete at a Division II or Division III school, you have 10 full-time semesters or 15 full-time quarters to play four seasons of competition. You use a semester or quarter when you attend classes at a two-year or four-year school as a full-time student or when you enroll part time and compete for your school. You do not use a term if you are not enrolled or if you attend part time without competing.

You are allowed to compete for up to four seasons in each sport for two-year or four-year schools. You do not gain back any seasons of competition by transferring to a new school. If you are transferring to a Division I or Division II school, you will be charged a season of competition for each academic year in which you competed. If you are transferring to a Division III school, you will be charged a season of competition for each academic year in which you competed or practiced on or after the date of the first competition. The amount of competition or practice does not matter – you are charged a season of eligibility for even a minute of competition or, in Division III, a minute of practice on or after the date of the first competition.

## IMPORTANT NCAA DEFINITIONS

**Academic year in residence** — also commonly referred to as “sitting out” — You may need to spend an academic year in residence without competing at your new school unless you qualify for a transfer exception. For an academic year in residence to count, you must complete a full-time program of studies for two semesters or three quarters. Summer school and part-time enrollment do not count for an academic year in residence.

**Certifying school** — The new school you want to attend determines whether you are eligible to play.

**Continuing eligibility rules** — Continuing eligibility rules affect how long you may compete in a certain sport.

- Division I - If you play at a Division I school, you have five calendar years to play four seasons of competition. Your five-year clock starts when you enroll as a full-time student at any college. Your clock continues to tick down, even if you spend an academic year in residence as a result of transferring, if you red shirt, if you do not attend school or even if you enroll part time during your college career.
- Divisions II and III - If you play at a Division II or III school, you have the first 10 semesters or 15 quarters in which you attend as a full-time student to complete your four seasons of participation. You use a semester or quarter any time you attend class as a full-time student or enroll part time and compete for the institution. You do not use a term if you only attend part time with no competition or are not enrolled for a term.

**Eligibility Center** — The NCAA Eligibility Center evaluates your high school academic record and amateurism history to determine if you are eligible to participate during your first year at a Division I or II college.

**Exception** — A transfer exception allows you to practice, compete or receive an athletics scholarship during your first year at your new school. Your new school will decide if you qualify for a transfer exception.

**Financial aid — or scholarship** — Any money for school you receive from a college or another source. Financial aid may be based on athletics, financial need or academic achievement.

**Full time** — Each school determines what full-time status means. Typically, you are a full-time student if you are enrolled for at least 12 credit hours in a term. Some schools define a full-time student as someone who takes fewer than 12 credit hours in a term.

**Initial eligibility rules** — Initial eligibility rules determine whether you may practice, compete and receive an athletics scholarship during your first year at a Division I or Division II school.

**International students** — An international student is any student who attends a two-year or four-year school outside the United States.

**NCAA — also National Collegiate Athletic Association** — the national governing body for more than 1,300 colleges, universities, conferences and organizations.

**National Letter of Intent (NLI)** — NCAA schools that are part of the program may send a National Letter of Intent to a prospective student-athlete they have recruited to participate in their intercollegiate sports program.

The letter is a legally binding contract. It explains what athletics financial aid the school agrees to provide the student-athlete for one full academic year, only if the student is admitted to the school and is eligible for financial aid under NCAA rules. If you sign a National Letter of Intent, you agree to attend that school for one academic year and other schools that are part of the National Letter of Intent program can no longer recruit you. For more information, go to [www.nationalletter.org](http://www.nationalletter.org).

**Nonqualifier** — A student who has not graduated from high school or who, at the time specified in the NCAA rules, has not successfully completed the required number of core-curriculum courses or has not presented the required GPA and/or SAT or ACT score required to be a qualifier. If you are a nonqualifier, you cannot practice, compete or receive an athletics scholarship from a Division I or II school during your first academic year. You will have only three seasons of competition in Division I; however, a fourth season may be granted if you complete 80 percent of your designated degree program before the start of your fifth year of enrollment.

**One-time transfer exception** — If you never have transferred from a four-year school, you may use a one-time exception to compete immediately at a Division I or II school.

To qualify for this exception, you must meet all the following conditions:

- You are in good academic standing and are making progress toward your degree at your current school.
- You would have been considered academically eligible to compete had you stayed at your current school.
- You have a written release agreement from your current school stating it does not object to you receiving a transfer exception.

If you are a Division I baseball, basketball and men's ice hockey student-athlete, you may not use the one-time transfer exception. If you are a Division I football student-athlete, you may use the one-time transfer exception only if you meet one of the following conditions:

- You are transferring from a Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) school to a Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) school and you have two seasons of competition eligibility remaining.
- You are transferring from an FCS school that offers athletics scholarships to an FCS school that does not offer athletics scholarships.
- You were not recruited by your first school and you never have received an athletics scholarship.

**Partial qualifier** — A student who has met some, but not all, of the academic requirements necessary to be a qualifier. If you are a partial qualifier, you can practice on campus and receive financial aid from a Division II school, but you cannot compete for one academic year. Division I does not have partial qualifiers.

**Permission-to-contact letter — or written permission to contact** — If you attend a four-year school full time, athletics staff members from an NCAA school cannot contact you or your parents unless they first have a letter from your current athletics director (or athletics administrator designated by the athletics director). If your current school does not grant you written permission to contact, the new school cannot encourage you to transfer and — in Divisions I and II — cannot give you an athletics scholarship until you have attended the new school for one academic year. If you are transferring from a school that is not a member of the NCAA or NAIA, you do not need a permission-to-contact letter.

**Qualifier** — A student who, for purposes of determining eligibility for financial aid, practice and competition, has:

- Graduated from high school
- Successfully completed the required core curriculum consisting of a minimum number of courses in specified subjects
- Obtained a specified minimum GPA in the core curriculum
- Obtained a specified minimum SAT or ACT score.

**Redshirt** — In Divisions I or II, redshirt refers to someone who attends a school full time, but does not play for an entire academic year for the sole purpose of saving a season of competition. A redshirt does not play in any college games or scrimmages in a given sport for an entire academic year, even though that student is otherwise eligible. If you do not play in a sport the entire academic year, you have not used a season of competition. However, if you play in even one second of a game as a college student-athlete, you are not a redshirt. Redshirting does not exist in Division III because if you play or practice after your first opportunity to compete, you are charged with a season of participation.

**Recruited** — If a college coach calls you more than once, contacts you off campus, pays your expenses to visit the campus, or in Divisions I and II, issues you a National Letter of Intent or a written offer of financial aid, you are considered to be recruited.

**Season of competition** — Generally, NCAA rules say that any competition in a season — regardless of the amount of time — counts as having played a season in that sport. If you play any time during a season, regardless of how long you played, it counts as having played for an entire season in that sport. Your season of competition starts when you spend one second in competition on the field, court, gym or track.

**Self-release** — If you are a student at a Division III school and you want to transfer to another Division III school, you may issue your own permission-to-contact self-release to allow another Division III school to contact you about transferring.

**Transferable credit hours** — Credit hours earned at your previous school that your new school will accept toward your degree. Each school determines how many and which credit hours are acceptable for transferring.

**Transfer trigger** — A condition that can affect your transfer status. A student who triggers transfer status is a student who:

- Has been a full-time student at a two-year or four-year college during a regular academic term. Classes taken during summer terms do not count.
- Practiced with a college team.
- Practiced or competed while enrolled as a part-time student.
- Received financial aid from a college while attending summer school.

**Two-year college** — A school where students can earn an Associate of Arts (AA) degree, an Associate of Science (AS) degree or an Associate of Applied Science degree within two years. Some people call these schools community colleges or junior colleges.

**Waiver** — An action that sets aside an NCAA rule because a specific, extraordinary circumstance prevents you from meeting the rule. An NCAA school may file a waiver on your behalf; you cannot file a waiver for yourself. The school does not administer the waiver, the conference office or NCAA does.

**Walk-on** — Someone who is not typically recruited by a school to participate in sports and does not receive an athletics scholarship from the school, but who becomes a member of one of the school's athletics teams.

## WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION

### **NCAA RESOURCES**

[NCAA.org/transfer](https://www.ncaa.org/transfer)

[NCAA.org/eligibilitycenter](https://www.ncaa.org/eligibilitycenter)

Follow us on Twitter [@NCAA\\_EC](https://twitter.com/NCAA_EC)

U.S. callers: 317-917-6008

International callers: 317-917-6222

Monday-Friday

10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern time

### **Certification Processing**

NCAA Eligibility Center

Certification Processing

P.O. Box 7136

Indianapolis, IN 46207

### **Overnight Delivery**

NCAA Eligibility Center

Certification Processing

1802 Alonzo Watford Sr. Drive

Indianapolis, IN 46202

### **NATIONAL LETTER OF INTENT RESOURCES**

[nationalletter.org](https://www.nationalletter.org)

317-223-0706

### **NCAA CONFERENCES**

[NCAA schools and conferences](https://www.ncaa.org/schools-and-conferences)

### **OTHER VALUABLE RESOURCES**

#### **National Junior College Athletic Association**

[njcaa.org](https://www.njcaa.org)

719-590-9788

1631 Mesa Avenue

Colorado Springs, CO 80906

#### **California Community College Athletics Association**

[ccaasports.org](https://www.cccaasports.org)

916-444-1600

2017 O Street

Sacramento, CA 95811

#### **Northwest Athletic Association of Community Colleges**

[nwacsports.org](https://www.nwacsports.org)

360-992-2833

1933 Fort Vancouver Way

Vancouver, WA 98663