

# SELF RELIANCE IN THE RECRUITING PROCESS



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## TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR RECRUITING PLAN

### What is the best way for a volleyball prospect to get themselves noticed by a college coach?

This is a good question even in “normal” times; but, during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is particularly important for would-be prospects to have a plan for putting themselves in a place where college coaches can see them play and evaluate their talent. In this article, I will suggest that the best way for prospects to get noticed is to be **“self-reliant”** by putting yourself in charge of your recruiting plan.

The recruiting process can be difficult and daunting, and many prospects might cringe at the idea that they should further complicate it by putting themselves in charge of it; but, for reasons that I will explain below, doing so has the potential to expand your recruiting horizons and prove to coaches—and to yourself—that playing at the next level is a priority for you.

**self-reliance;**  
**reliant on one's own powers and resources rather than those of others**

### Know the Recruiting Landscape

Since all good plans start with an assessment of the context in which they are being made, consider some of the important elements of the current recruiting situation:

- **NCAA Division 1 remains in a “dead period,”** which means that there can be no in-person visits, evaluations or one-on-one time of any kind until at least mid-April 2021.
- **NCAA Divisions 2 and 3, the NAIA, and NJCAA** schools are not currently restricted from in-person visits or evaluations; but, due to state, local, and university guidelines, not every school in these divisions is able to recruit in person or on campus.
- **Because they have been offered what amounts to an extra year of eligibility,** many student-athletes will remain on their team’s roster for another year, which might reduce the number of recruits a program will be pursuing in upcoming years.
- **Due to the continuing financial impact** of the COVID-19 pandemic, many schools may want to reduce the resources they dedicate to their off-campus recruiting efforts.

Taking all of this into consideration, prospects might start to see the need to adopt a **“self-reliant”** mindset when it comes to making a recruiting plan. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the landscape so that very few players will be discovered by coaches that attend club tournaments. It’s not going to be enough for players to just show up at tournaments, play volleyball, and wait for the recruiting notes to arrive. For all the reasons I have listed on page 1, college coaches might not be at these tournaments, and players will therefore need to find coaches where they are spending most of their times this year: in front of computers (in their offices or at home), trying to find ways to fill their roster with high-school aged prospects. During this COVID-19 pandemic, ambitious players must develop a new strategy.

## **Make A Recruiting Plan**

There are many ways to reach these college coaches including a very wide range of recruiting services that will (for a fee) make attempts to contact coaches on your behalf. Note: NCAA legislation prohibits DI coaches from responding or discussing prospects with a recruiting service even after June 15 of their sophomore year.

Since I’ve already introduced the idea of adopting a **“self-reliant”** mindset for getting yourself noticed by coaches, let’s talk about some of the steps you can take as you put yourself in charge of your recruiting:



### **1. Organize Your Materials** Even before you start reaching out to coaches, you’ll need to have some, if not all, of the following information:

**A highlight video.** Keep this simple, and don’t worry too much about production value. If you have a 3-5-minute video of yourself performing in competition, you have what most coaches want to see on the first viewing. If they want to see more, they’ll ask for it. You can also offer (or even provide) links to full-match video of your play.

There is no need to edit full-match video. Just make sure that you let coaches know your uniform number (or t-shirt color) and position in the video. Please choose a match where you are involved often as a player.

For example: if you are a libero select a match in which you do get served (this might be difficult as a team often avoids the libero), or if you are a middle hitter select a match in which your team passes well enough for you to have offensive attempts.

**Player profile.** Data about yourself as a player. This data should include your grad year, your position, your height, and your jump touch and block touch (if you have that information).

Information about yourself as a student. This information should include your GPA, your intended major (if any), and standardized test scores (again, if you have them).

A club schedule. Even if they can’t come to see you play right now, most coaches will want to know where you’ll be playing in the upcoming months. It is also helpful if you indicate whether or not the tournament will be live streaming. Finally, don’t forget to identify your club team and your uniform number.

**Planning is the process of thinking about the activities required to achieve a desired goal. It is the first and foremost activity to achieve desired results.**

## 2. Do the Research

Make a list of college programs that you feel would be a good fit for you.

This step isn't easy, and it's sometimes hard to know where you'll fit. However, many clubs will have resources that you can use to help you. It's okay to start with a wide range of schools at different levels, as the response you get will usually help you see where you're likely to find the best fit.

If you write to every DI program and don't hear from teams in the top 50 but receive responses from several schools ranked in the top 100 of DI and/or the top 25 in DII, then you can focus on that range.

NOTE: If your academic interests are specific, you'll want to take that into consideration while putting together your college list. If you are set on marine biology as a career, there is little reason to contact volleyball coaches at schools that don't have this major.

## 3. Compose a Professional Email

Include the information listed previously and **be sure to visit their volleyball athletic and academic sites before reaching out**. Most coaches I know prefer professional messages that are somewhat personalized to their programs. In other words, they don't like it when messages seem mass-produced and that there isn't any specific interest in their programs. (I've sometimes raised an eyebrow when recruits have addressed me by the wrong name because they forgot to change the name when they cut and pasted the email they had sent to another coach.)

If you're genuinely interested in a program, explain why you're interested; if you're just starting the process and are trying to find out where you fit, disclose that fact in the email.

Professionalism and honesty from you in your email will elicit a professional and honest response from most coaches, and that will help you get back from coaches the information you'll need to navigate your way through the recruiting process.

## 4. Putting it all Together

Once you have your video, your list of colleges, and your plan for sending that first email, you'll begin the long process of back-and-forth conversations with coaches. Again, I would encourage you to take responsibility for your correspondence with coaches. Most college coaches want to hear from you, so avoid the temptation to outsource your recruiting correspondence to your parents or recruiting services.

Coaches want to get to know you and to find out whether your goals (not your parents' goals for you) align with theirs. Also, please know that, because most of the collegiate volleyball season has been moved to the spring semester, college coaches are going to be very busy this winter and spring. If they don't get back to you right away, follow up with them; if they still don't get back to you, decide if it's worth your continued efforts and make your own decisions about whether or not to keep them on your list.

**Again, be self-reliant in this process.**



## Conclusion: Finding Success In Difficult Times

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a wide range of difficulties in the recruiting process. There is no point in denying it. However, **one of the unexpected benefits of approaching recruiting with self-reliance is that you will start to realize that, even in difficult times, you don't need to be a victim of circumstance**—indeed, you will see that you retain the power to act on your own behalf.

Will it work out for you to play for exactly the team that you think you want to join? Perhaps not; **but, by being self-reliant in the recruiting process, you will demonstrate the qualities that coaches want to see in their players**. In so doing, you increase the likelihood that you'll find a place to play at the next level. And, along the way, you'll learn something more about yourself and **your ability to be an agent—not a victim—when circumstances are challenging**.