



As a high school athlete, the sheer number of responsibilities you have can be overwhelming. On top of school, conditioning, sports and college preparation, you likely have other things that you'd like to do such as spend time with friends or get some extra training in with a position or speed coach.

I've often found that the biggest issue is not that there's no time, but that it's hard to organize your schedule in a way that makes sense in the long term. To get the most out of your time, you need to be doing the right things at the right time.

You have to do certain things as an athlete, this list should help you organize your responsibilities by putting them into a logical progression from freshman to senior year.

These are, for the most part, general suggestions that could be moved around based on your realistic goals for college (Not everyone goes Division 1) and some of the classes you are taking (i'll explain more later).

I've broken this up into academic and athletic timelines by year. Some of this will overlap, because as a student-athlete, your school and your sport are never truly separate.

## **ACADEMIC TIMELINE**

### ***Freshman Year***

The biggest difference in high school and middle school is the way your classes are scheduled. Your classes finish each semester, meaning you probably won't take math or English or science for the entire year. Because of that, your schedule in a lot of ways can be easier.

You should first familiarize yourself with what the NCAA calls your "core classes". As an athlete, your GPA in these classes alone determines your college eligibility. Sorry, your 'A' in Underwater Basket Weaving won't help you be eligible to play in college. You need to know which classes count and don't count towards your core GPA. Usually, only about 16-17 of your 32 classes in high school will affect this. Unfortunately, these are often some of your hardest.

As a freshman, your goal is to get ahead. Odds are, you'll never have more free time to work on your academics as a freshman. College visits aren't that important yet, and usually at this point (Assuming you're playing JV) you aren't traveling as much as you would on varsity as a sophomore, junior or senior.

So, you need to take advantage. I could name 100 players that had to go to Junior College because they didn't care about school until it was too late. Start now!



A good foundation in English, Math, science and social studies can give you a great safety net for later in school. And good study habits are easier to maintain after your freshman year than to start after your freshman year. If you start the right way, you WILL finish the right way.

#### Action Steps:

1. Research Core GPA- Go to [this link](#), learn which classes count and do not count towards your core GPA. Talk with a guidance counselor about a plan for the next four years.
2. Make sure your course load is manageable- Your high school classes are only a semester long. Because of this they're usually accelerated. If possible, try to get your hardest classes during different semesters. Taking English, math, science and social studies in the same semester so you can take easy classes the next will only make your life harder.
3. If you struggle in a subject, talk to your counselor about getting that class in the opposite semester as your sport. If you play baseball, taking your hardest class in the spring will make your life difficult! Try to take a lighter course load in your main sport's semester.

### ***Sophomore Year***

Depending on which classes you are taking (Especially in math), your sophomore and junior year timelines may look different than this.

Every high school sophomore takes the PSAT during their sophomore year. It's not exactly the same as your SAT, but can be a good indication of where you need the most help and about what your score on the SAT would be.

Other than simply continuing to work hard, sophomore year is good for two other things.

First, you need to register with the [NCAA Eligibility Center](#). This will make sure you are on the right track to becoming eligible in college. Continue to take the classes you need to take and do as well as you can in them. Do the absolute best you can. Don't overload yourself, but remember that challenging yourself is good.

Second, many schools will have their students take the PSAT as a sophomore. This does not count for college but can give you a good indication of what you might score on an actual SAT.

Once you've taken the PSAT and Math 2 (Or geometry, depending on what curriculum your school uses), you're in good position to take the SAT. The SAT Math sections are almost entirely made up of concepts from Math 1 and Math 2, so spring of your sophomore year is often a great time to take it. If you haven't taken Math 2 by then, you have time. For some



though, taking the SAT your sophomore year is a great way to get ahead and even to finish early, depending on your score.

\*NOTE: The ACT has some Math 3 concepts, so if you choose to take that instead, it may help to wait until your junior year. If you're not sure which test to take, take a look at our [SAT vs. ACT guide](#).

Action Steps:

1. Register with the [Eligibility Center](#)
2. Take the PSAT and learn from your score report
3. If you've taken Math 2, consider taking the SAT in the spring

### ***Junior Year***

Your junior year will often be the busiest time of your school and recruitment.

First, make sure you're on track to graduate on time (Or early, if you want to enroll in college a semester early).

If you've kept track of your core classes and GPA, you should be in great shape. Make sure you've taken the SAT or ACT at least once by the end of the first semester. Depending on your goal score, you may need to take it a couple more times. When you do take it, make sure the Eligibility Center gets your score (Code 9999 on both tests).

At the end of your junior spring, ask your guidance counselor to upload your official transcript to the Eligibility Center. You should have a good idea by this point about where you stand on future eligibility.

The junior year is often the hardest, so do your best and keep working hard.

Action Steps:

1. Check in with your counselor to see if you're on track to graduate on time
2. Take the SAT or ACT
3. Keep working hard, your classes are probably more difficult now than ever.



## **Senior Year**

There isn't actually a lot to do your senior year. If you've been proactive, you're probably finished with your SAT/ACT (Though you can still take and improve your score at this point) and you just need to request your final [amateurism certification](#) by April 1 and send your official transcript to the Eligibility Center after graduating.

You are required to have most of your core classes finished before your senior year, so as long as you've done that you'll only have a class or two more to complete for graduation and eligibility.

If you want to graduate early (Maybe to enroll early in your college), your timeline is simply accelerated. You still need the same amount of core credits. This means that you'll obviously have to take English the first semester so you'll have it done by the time you want to graduate.

Action Steps:

1. Make sure you're satisfied with your SAT/ACT score
2. Request your [amateurism certification](#) by April 1
3. Send your official transcript to your college after graduation

## **ATHLETIC TIMELINE**

### ***Freshman Year:***

As a freshman, forget about recruiting. Forget it, don't think about it.

Odds are, you'll grow and may even end up being recruited at a position completely different than the one you currently play. It doesn't matter if you haven't made varsity or even if you aren't starting on JV. Michael Jordan didn't make his high school varsity team until he was a junior.

Get off on the right foot with your coaches. Be mature and work hard, they'll see that and you should be rewarded later. Don't expect anything, but be grateful for any playing time you do get.

Your coaches can be your biggest advocates. Not only are they ultimately the ones who determine your playing time, but they can also put you in touch with college coaches and make sure you get noticed. Your coaches should be your biggest allies throughout your high school career. Hopefully, they care about you as a person and a student, more than just as a player. A great relationship with a coach can be your best asset.



Your focus should be on getting better. This means that you should start identifying your weaknesses and working on them while also getting better at your strengths. College recruiting for the vast majority of teams is less about finding perfectly well-rounded player and more about finding players that excel in a few areas. So, if you are a speedy running back, it's nice to work on pass blocking, but don't neglect your speed and agility drills.

I'm a proponent of playing multiple sports. From 2017-2019 only 8 NFL first round picks played just football in high school. By comparison, 88 first rounders played at least two sports in high school. If you're serious about your primary sport, you should play other sports in your offseason.

Focus on getting better. The recruiting can come later.

Action Steps:

1. Impress your coaches with your work ethic
2. Identify your strengths and weaknesses
3. Find another sport that complements your main sport
4. Do not worry recruiting

### ***Sophomore Year***

Often, your junior year is your busiest. Because of this, it helps to do some of the things a year early.

By your sophomore year, you should have a good idea about where you need to improve. If you haven't found a position coach or strength and conditioning coach to help you get better. Work outside of practice to get better. At this point, even if you're working hard in practice, you'll be lapped by your competition if you aren't putting in work outside of practice hours.

Sophomore year is a good time to go to some exposure camps or prospect camps. I don't advise against going as a freshman, but unless you're a top 50 national prospect, college coaches don't really pay much attention until your sophomore year.

Challenge yourself, but don't put yourself in a position to get embarrassed. You want to stand out for the right reasons. Remember to always thank your coaches and be respectful while there — those things can have as much of an impact on your recruitment as your on-field performance.

During the summer, go on a few college visits. There's no reason at this point to be picky, so cast a wide net. Make sure you work out at school-specific camps where possible.



Action Steps:

1. Work with an outside trainer
2. Go to some exposure camps
3. Visit some colleges during the summer

**Junior Year**

September 1 of your junior year is monumentally important. After that day, coaches can begin reaching out to you personally via Twitter, text or other electronic communication. That's when you may start to hear from coaches.

Your junior year is the reality check year. If you aren't playing a significant amount during your junior year, your odds of receiving a college scholarship start to dwindle. There are obviously exceptions (Like if the player in front of you is a national recruit and you know you'll start the next year), but you aren't likely to excel in college athletics if you aren't in high school (Don't worry, sports look GREAT on college applications, even if you aren't going to play in college).

Attend camps, network with college coaches, and continue to get better.

By the end of your junior year, it's nice to have an idea of which schools you actually like. Having trouble narrowing things down? Think of things like location, campus life, your relationships with the coaches, and the scheme the team runs.

Then, you can visit those schools (especially the camps) in the spring and over the summer.

If you have no interest from schools whatsoever, market yourself, reach out to coaches and continue to work hard. Seek advice from a trusted coach that can have an honest conversation with you. I know plenty of players that had no contact with colleges before October of their senior year and still earned scholarships. However, I also know players that never received any interest. Make sure you have a backup plan and then talk to the coach. Often, they can tell you honestly if you are talented enough to play at the next level.

Action Steps:

1. Begin reaching out to college coaches
2. If you have options, try to start narrowing them down
3. If you don't have options, talk to a trusted coach about what your future may look like



**Senior Year**

From a recruiting perspective, your senior year can vary dramatically depending on what kind of college interest you have. If you have committed or generally know where you want to go, it's the easiest — and most rewarding year.

Focus on your high school team. Have fun, work hard, and try to win as much as possible. If you have a scholarship opportunity, just don't mess it up! Talk with your future coaches about what to work on while still in school. Finally, enjoy your Signing Day, because you only get one!

If you still do not have any scholarship offers, make sure you're looking at all of your options. Attend every unsigned senior showcase you can find and don't ignore Division II and Division III coaches. About half of the players that end up playing in college get offered late in the process. Keep in mind that smaller schools usually don't have the resources to scout underclassmen. Most of their time is spent on the incoming class, so you have opportunity to be seen.

Again, just be realistic. If you don't get an offer, it's okay. High school sport participation is great on college applications. Just don't miss any admissions deadlines!

Action Steps:

1. If you have offers, make your decision and enjoy your senior year
2. If you still do not have an offer and truly believe you can get one, make every possible effort to do so.
3. Pay attention to both athletic and academic deadlines

	<b>ATHLETIC</b>	<b>ACADEMIC</b>
<b>FRESHMAN YEAR</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Impress your coaches with your work ethic</li> <li>- Identify your strengths and weaknesses</li> <li>- Find another sport that complements your main sport</li> <li>- Do not worry about your recruiting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learn which classes count as core classes</li> <li>- Get off to a good start</li> <li>- Familiarize yourself with your academic "track" — Which classes will you probably take in the next few years?</li> </ul>
<b>SOPHOMORE YEAR</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work with an outside trainer</li> <li>- Go to some exposure camps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Register with the <a href="#">Eligibility Center</a></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Visit some colleges during the summer. Make sure you attend their camps if possible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Take the PSAT and learn from your score report</li> <li>- If you've taken Math 2, consider taking the SAT in the spring</li> </ul>
<b>JUNIOR YEAR</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Begin reaching out to college coaches</li> <li>- If you have options, try to start narrowing them down</li> <li>- If you don't have options, talk to a trusted coach about what your future may look like</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Check in with your counselor to see if you're on track to graduate on time</li> <li>- Take the <a href="#">SAT or ACT</a></li> <li>- Keep working hard, your classes are probably more difficult now than ever.</li> </ul>
<b>SENIOR YEAR</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If you have offers, make your decision and enjoy your senior year</li> <li>- If you still do not have an offer and truly believe you can get one, make every possible effort to do so.</li> <li>- Pay attention to both athletic and academic deadlines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Make sure you're satisfied with your SAT/ACT score</li> <li>- Request your <a href="#">amateurism certification</a> by April 1</li> <li>- Send your official transcript to your college after graduation</li> </ul>