



# NATIONAL SIGNING DAY

**Impact of Coronavirus on College Recruiting:** The NCAA recruiting rules are now different for each division level. **NCAA Division I has suspended all in-person recruiting through April 15, 2021.** As of September 1, 2020, NCAA Division II and Division III have resumed the **regular recruiting rules.** Stay on top of the latest news involving the **extra year of eligibility for college athletes and how it impacts recruiting.** The NCAA has **removed the SAT/ACT requirement from their initial academic eligibility requirements.** Schools might still require you take the SAT/ACT.

One of the most exciting moments for a student-athlete is **receiving a verbal scholarship offer.** Years of hard work have led to this moment. However, nothing is official until you sign the National Letter of Intent (NLI.) Not every school uses the NLI—about 650 NCAA Division I and Division II schools—and it's not mandatory to sign. The **National Letter of Intent** is not affiliated directly with the NCAA; it was created by the Collegiate Commissioners Association to protect both the college and student from either party backing out.

**Insider tip:** NAIA and NJCAA have their own versions of the letter. If your student-athlete is attending school in one of those divisions, be sure to understand the nuances of those letter programs.

## National Signing Day

For many sports, especially in Division I, National Signing Day has become a celebrated event. Technically, student-athletes do not need to sign their National Letters of Intent on the first day of the Signing Period, but many do. Below are updated signing dates for each sport for student-athletes signing in 2019-2020 for 2020-2021 enrollment: Baseball and Softball is August 1, 2021.

**Insider tip:** You can sign a National Letter Intent after the last Signing Period ends, but it is rare that there will be any roster spots left.



When your student-athlete receives their NLI document, the appropriate Signing Period should be checked. If the Signing Period has begun for their sport, they must sign within seven days of the issue date (noted on the document). If they receive the NLI document before the Signing Period window opens, they must wait until 7 a.m. of the first date of the period. The student-athlete's parent or legal guardian must also sign the document; college coaches cannot be present during the signing.

**Insider tip:** You do not have to have final certification by the NCAA Eligibility Center in order to sign a NLI. However, if you do not receive certification by the time you start school, your NLI will be null and void and you will lose your scholarship.

### **Signing Period rules for 2020-21 school year**

Starting in the 2019-20 school year, significant updates to the Signing Period rules have sped up the timeline for seniors looking to sign with a school. In the past, there was an early Signing Period (usually in November) followed by a break over the holidays (dead period) before signing NLIs resumed in the spring during the regular Signing Period. Starting in 2019, all athletes outside of football and men's and women's Division I basketball players can begin signing scholarships on November 1, 2020 and continue to sign anytime through August 1, 2021.

While much of the recruiting process happens long before November of your senior year, the fact that athletes will be ending their recruiting by signing NLIs earlier means recruiting in the lower divisions will likely speed up as well. In the past, NCAA Division II, Division III and NAIA schools would wait for Division I programs to complete their recruiting classes before ramping up their signings. Now that Division I schools will be completing their signings earlier, expect all other division levels to be busy over the holidays instead of mid to late spring.

**Insider tip:** If you are a senior in the class of 2021, you have no time to wait.

Opportunities are going to fill up even earlier than before. For all underclassmen, this should put you on notice to make sure you have a solid recruiting relationship going into your senior year instead of waiting to get started.



## What signing the NLI means

Signing on the dotted line of the National Letter of Intent means three things:

1. Your student-athlete has committed to one year at the university. They do not need to sign an NLI after their first year. The school is required to let student-athletes know if their scholarship is being renewed after the first year.
2. The university is promising to provide an athletic scholarship for that year. The NLI and financial aid package are two separate documents. Your student-athlete will need to sign both.
3. Your student-athlete's recruiting journey is over. No other schools can continue to recruit them.

An NLI is a legal, binding contract. So, it is something you are going to want to fully understand before signing it. Your athlete's new coach and representatives from the school can help answer your questions or concerns when it comes to signing the NLI.

**Insider tip:** If your student-athlete has been invited to walk-on (no scholarship), they will not sign a National Letter of Intent.

Keep in mind that signing an NLI does not mean your student-athlete has been admitted into the university. Schools have separate admission requirements that student-athletes must meet in order to be enrolled.

## Do you have to re-sign a NLI every year?

While the National Letter of Intent is only a one-year contract, student-athletes do not have to re-sign every year.

In the video below, NCSA recruiting experts Kyle Winters and David Kmiecik break down why student-athletes only sign a NLI ahead of enrolling in a four-year college, how college athletes are notified about their athletic scholarship renewal and what athletes should know about negotiating offers before officially signing their NLI.



## Early Signing Period

This is the first time throughout the year high school seniors can sign their National Letter of Intent and lock down their scholarship offer. Early Signing Periods are great for athletes who have an offer from one of their top schools, and they're ready to make the commitment as soon as possible.

Athletes don't have to sign during the early period if they are holding out for an offer from one of their favorite schools. If you do have an offer and you don't sign during the early Signing Period, however, that coach may question your commitment and consider giving your spot to an athlete who's a sure thing. Make sure you're ready to tell a coach why you didn't sign if you opt out.

Early Signing Period really marks the beginning of scholarship musical chairs. If you aren't signing during this period, don't worry—but keep working hard to make sure you have an offer lined up by the regular Signing Period. Contact all the coaches on your list, and find new ways to show them that you should be their next recruit.

## Regular Signing Period

This is the period of time in which athletes who have verbal offers from college coaches will make their athletic scholarships official by signing their National Letter of Intent. The first day of the Signing Period is Signing Day, and it's marked by celebrations, reveals and a lot of college gear. Remember: Athletes can sign with their school of choice on any day of the Signing Period. Signing Day just marks the first day of the full Signing Period.

## Early enrollment

High school seniors can opt to graduate a semester early so they are able to attend college one semester ahead of schedule. This gives them the opportunity to practice with the team and learn the system before their first season as a college athlete. It also allows the athletes to take classes while they aren't yet fully immersed in the busy schedule of an in-season athlete. However, not everyone is a proponent of early enrollment, including some



coaches. They argue that senior year student-athletes should be spending time with high school friends and teammates, perhaps competing in another sport, attending prom and celebrating their last year as a high school student.

Currently, **early enrollment is a growing trend in Division I football**, but it's not long before other sports join in. If you think early enrollment might be right for you, talk to the coach who's recruiting you and triple check that you'll still be academically eligible without your last semester of course.

### **National Letter of Intent release rules**

If your student-athlete changes their mind about the school they signed an NLI with, they must ask to be released from the program. If they are not granted a release form, the player will lose one year of eligibility. A common reason why student-athletes decide to enroll in a school other than the one they've signed an NLI with is if the coach at the program leaves the school. The National Letter of Intent is a legal contract between a school and a student-athlete; they are not tied to coaches.

**Insider tip:** If your student-athlete isn't granted a release and they don't want to sit out for a year, they can play at the junior college level or sign with a NAIA school.

