

Communicating with a College Coach

Think of a coach as the gatekeeper to the school of your dreams. Any chance you get to speak face to face with the gatekeeper is a huge opportunity to make a great impression and to obtain valuable info. Too many recruits communicate poorly or conduct themselves improperly with potential coaches, wasting their opportunities and hurting their chances for a spot on the roster.

Educate yourself on putting your best foot forward so that you can get the most out of one-on-ones. When coaches spend time with you, they send you clear signals, not just with their words, but also with their demeanor and posture. Likewise, how you conduct yourself gives a coach ideas about the kind of person you are. This subtle back-and-forth signal exchange can be informative and is crucial to starting your relationship right. So be aware of body language, yours and the coach's.

Posture

Don't slouch or lean back. A strong, confident posture will let the coach know that you are truly interested in playing for him. Observe the coach's posture, too. Is he engaged and making eye contact, or withdrawn and distracted? Does he seem enthusiastic or bored? Noting his body language can help you gauge whether he really wants to speak with you.

Eyes & Hands

Make direct eye contact and offer a firm handshake, letting the coach know that you are a strong and mature athlete who can compete at a high level. Locking your eyes on your shoes screams timid child, not future All-American. Likewise, according to *The Student Athlete's Handbook: The Complete Guide for Success*, the strength of a coach's handshake reveals his level of confidence in you, and eye contact shows interest.

Once you've presented yourself well and begun to read the coach you're chatting with, take advantage of his presence. High school athletes often get so caught up in the excitement of being recruited that they fail to ask important questions about the school's academic and athletic programs. If you get answers ahead of time to questions like the following, you'll avoid unpleasant surprises after you show up on campus.

- How many hours per week will your sport take up in-season?
- How extensive is the off-season program?
- Is there a J.V. or freshman team?
- How many players does the team carry?
- Is it possible to play two sports?
- What are the practice, game and training facilities like for your sport?
- How many players on the team receive full scholarships? Partial scholarships?
- How many players walk on?
- How does the coach expect the team to do in the next year or two?
- What is the upcoming schedule like?
- How many recent players are now playing professionally?
- Who is ahead of you at your position? How good are they, and how many years do they have left?
- How many players does the coach plan to bring in at your position?
- What kind of system does the team run? Do you fit in?
- How does the coach assess your ability? What will your role be, now and in the future?
- Is red-shirting an option?
- How likely are you to receive a scholarship offer?
- What's the general attitude and personality of the team?
- What is the academic standing of the team (graduation rates? GPAs?)
- Are tutors available for team members?
- Do team members live together or with the general student population?