

Athletic Scholarships: The Basics

How to score one of these coveted college scholarships.

Athletic scholarships may be one of the most recognized of all college scholarships. But although many people dream of receiving this kind of financial aid, very few do. Only a limited number of schools offer this type of money for college, and the competition to receive it is incredibly high.

To get yourself in the best position to receive an athletic scholarship, you need to find out what's required of applicants. Top on the list of things to know? That you can't slack on your academics no matter how athletically gifted you are.

Think you only need to excel in sports to receive one of these college scholarships? Think again. You're expected to perform both on the field and in the classroom to receive this college money. Colleges and universities expect you to get a solid college education as well as play for their team.

What Kind of Athletic Scholarships Are There?

Athletic scholarships are primarily awarded by three national athletic organizations. They are:

- National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)
- National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA)
- National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA)

The NCAA is the largest of the three organizations. Smaller colleges and universities are part of the NAIA, and, as the name indicates, the NJCAA is the association for junior colleges and [community colleges](#).

There are five primary types of scholarships awarded to students pursuing a college degree:

- Full four-year scholarship – a full ride, the most coveted athletic scholarship
- Full one-year renewable contract – your scholarship is automatically renewed at the end of the school year if you've met the conditions of the contract
- One-year trial grant – this is offered as a full or partial scholarship and involves a verbal agreement between the student and the school that the grant will be renewed at the end of the school year if the student's academic and athletic performance are considered satisfactory by the school
- Partial scholarship – this college money pays for any part of the student's college costs, such as tuition
- Waiver of out-of-state fees – this allows out-of-state applicants to complete their college program for the same cost as an in-state student

How Do You Receive an Athletic Scholarship?

First of all, you need to excel in a sport that awards money for college, such as: basketball, crew, cross country, fencing, field hockey, football, golf, sailing, skiing, soccer, tennis and wrestling.

During the fall of your junior year, meet with your guidance counselor to find out if your grade point average (GPA) is on track and you meet the other academic requirements for this kind of college aid. Your counselor can also help you find schools that offer scholarships in the sport you excel in.

Once you've found the schools you want to apply to, contact the head coaches and ask to be interviewed by them or by a local recruiter. Be sure to confirm the academic and athletic requirements for their school's scholarships and find out what athletic position you could be considered for.

You will also be asked to submit an athletic portfolio (also called an athletic scholarship résumé) to show off your qualifications. To highlight your athletic skills, include a summary of the positions you've played, the years of you've played each one, any athletic awards you received, letters of recommendation from your coaches, newspaper clippings highlighting your best moments and a short video of you in action.

Additionally, you'll want to include your GPA, scores on standardized tests and any academic awards or other achievements you've earned. Also, be sure to include your work experience, community organizations you belong to and any other significant extra-curricular activities you engaged in.

Athletic Scholarships Tips & Tactics

- Attention, female athletes! Federal laws have been established to ensure that women receive their share of athletic scholarships, so there's a lot of college money available to women seeking financial aid for their sports skills.
- If you don't receive a scholarship at your top school, stay in touch with the coach and/or recruiter. Another student may decline their scholarship money, which could open the door for you to get your college education at that school after all.
- In addition to pursuing athletic scholarships from schools, contact organizations for your sport to see if they also offer college scholarships. Regional groups and associations, especially for less competitive sports, will often offer money for college.

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