

The College Baseball Recruiting Timeline Every Parent Needs in Their Back Pocket

14U

Recruiting

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It was 7:45 on a Tuesday morning and a dad we'll call Marcus was standing at the edge of the batting cage with his arms crossed, watching his son take swings. The kid — a 14-year-old shortstop with a quick first step and a compact left-handed stroke — had just dropped a fat liner up the gap, and Marcus looked over at us and said, "So when do we need to start talking to colleges?"

We get some version of that question every single week. And the honest answer — the one that actually helps families — is not "right now" or "don't worry yet." It's a specific timeline with clear milestones, realistic expectations, and a plan for doing the right work at every stage.

That's exactly what we're laying out here. If your athlete is in the 14U window and you're starting to think about college baseball, this guide was written for you.

Why 14U Is the Right Time to Start Paying Attention

We coached a right-handed pitcher for three years who ended up signing with a Division I program. He was already physically mature at 14 — 6'1", mid-80s velocity, three pitches. His parents were organized from the beginning: early campus visits, consistent tournament exposure, a clean highlight reel. That kid had a scholarship committed before his sophomore year of high school.

Most families are not in that situation. And that's okay. But the point is this: at 14U, your athlete is entering the window where early-recruiting programs start their watches. Not all coaches recruit this early, but enough do that being invisible at 14 can cost you options at 17.

The 14U year is less about landing offers and more about establishing presence — playing in front of evaluators, building a highlight film, and beginning to understand what programs look for.

The College Baseball Recruiting Timeline for Parents

14U (Freshman Year) — Build the Foundation

This is a year for positioning, not panic. Your athlete should be playing for a reputable travel program, participating in showcase tournaments, and competing against quality opponents. College coaches at JUCO, Division II, and Division III schools actively evaluate 14U players. D-I programs are watching too, though verbal commitments before 9th grade are rare and often premature.

What to do this year:

- Register on recruiting platforms and create a basic athletic profile. Start gathering measurables: height, weight, 60-yard dash, exit velocity, positional metrics.
- Begin a simple highlight reel — even one quality tournament clip per month adds up.
- Attend a college camp at a program your athlete is genuinely interested in. These camps get your athlete in front of coaching staff in a low-pressure environment.
- Make sure your athlete has the right equipment for competitive showcases. We always tell parents to get wood bats at

dividends when coaches watch exit velo during showcases.

15U (Sophomore Year) — Get on the Radar

Sophomore year is when things start to accelerate. This is the year most athletes should complete their official academic transcript review, take a first run at the SAT or ACT, and refine their athletic profile with current video.

Email outreach to coaches can begin in earnest here. Parents often write the first emails, and that's fine — just make sure the tone is athlete-led and coach-friendly. Be brief. Share measurables, a highlight link, and genuine program interest. Do not mass-blast 200 programs. Target 30–40 schools that match your athlete's ability level and academic interests.

Big showcase tournaments — Perfect Game, PBR, WWBA — are worth attending this summer if your athlete's skill level supports it. Recruiters track results on these platforms year-round.

16U (Junior Year) — The High-Urgency Window

Junior year is where decisions get made. Most scholarship commitments at D-I programs happen during the 16U summer. This is the highest-leverage window in the entire recruiting process.

Your athlete should be playing in front of coaches at every major showcase they attend. Visit campuses — official and unofficial. Have real conversations about roster needs, projected scholarship value, and expected roles.

If your athlete is still developing and isn't seeing D-I interest, that is not a failure. Division II, Division III, and JUCO programs have tremendous baseball and graduate players to professional levels. Broaden the target list now rather than later.

Also: this is the year when on-field gear starts mattering more than parents might think. Coaches notice athletes who look and move like players. Quality fielding gloves, proper batting gloves — the details signal that a family is invested. You can get batting gloves at theranchsports.com — and the selection runs from youth travel up through high-level showcase gear.

17U–18U (Senior Year) — Close It Out

By senior year, the recruiting window for most athletes is either closing or wrapping up. Athletes who haven't committed should be actively working through their final shortlist, being honest about fit (athletic and academic), and visiting campuses they're seriously considering.

National Letter of Intent signing periods begin in November of senior year for most sports. Early Decision options exist at some programs. Do not miss key deadlines — late paperwork has cost athletes roster spots.

What College Coaches Are Actually Evaluating

We've had coaches tell us straight up: they're watching six things when they evaluate a 14U or 15U player.

1. **Athletic projection** — What does this athlete look like in two to three years?
2. **Competitiveness** — How does he respond when he fails? Does he want the next at-bat or does he hide?
3. **Baseball IQ** — Does he understand the game situationally?
4. **Coachability** — Does he make adjustments quickly?
5. **Academic eligibility** — Will he qualify?
6. **Character** — What are his teammates like? What does his body language say?

The sixth point matters more than families expect. Coaches watch entire dugouts, not just the player they're scouting.

A Simple Showcase Prep Sequence

When we prepare athletes for evaluation opportunities, we use this four-step sequence during the two weeks leading into a showcase. We run it with every prospect we work with, regardless of age.

Step 1 — 60-Yard Dash Mechanics (Days 1–3) Work on explosive first-step footwork from a standing start. Use a 10-yard acceleration marker. Coaching cue: "Drive back knee through, don't reach." Time every rep. Video from the side so the athlete can self-correct.

Step 2 — Exit Velocity Tracking (Days 3–6) Run cage sessions focused entirely on hard contact, not barrel control. Tee work, front toss, soft toss — measure exit velocity on every rep. Coaching cue: "Stay tall through the ball, don't collapse the backside." Track daily highs and lows.

Step 3 — Position-Specific Showcase Reps (Days 6–10) Run the exact sequences coaches see at showcases. Infielders: fielding at short, throw to first, DP footwork. Outfielders: tracking fly balls, crow-hop, throw to a base. Pitchers: pen sessions with intent, no more than 30 pitches per day. Coaching cue for everyone: "Play at game speed. Showcases aren't practice."

Step 4 — Mental Reset Day (Day Before Showcase) Light catch, no cage work, no intense reps. Review the program's roster, the coach's name, two things your athlete wants to show. Go to bed early. Coaching cue: "You've done the work. Trust it."

Keeping the Academic Side Clean

The most avoidable recruiting disaster we see is an athlete who plays at a high level but doesn't qualify academically. The NCAA Eligibility Center requires a minimum GPA in core courses and a minimum ACT or SAT score. These standards are not optional — a low GPA can make a full scholarship offer disappear overnight.

Our standard advice: your athlete should have a 3.0 or better in core academic courses by the end of sophomore year and a first ACT score by spring of junior year. Test early. You can always test again, but you can't undo a transcript.

Use the Tools That Exist

We are big advocates of building a centralized recruiting profile early and keeping it updated. The Prospect Athlete app was built exactly for this moment — it gives student athletes a clean, coach-accessible recruiting profile they can build on iOS. You can track measurables, upload video, and organize your target school list all in one place. For families navigating the college baseball recruiting timeline for parents, having your athlete's information organized and shareable is one of the most practical things you can do right now.

For more on the full recruiting process, see our college recruiting hub — we cover everything from academic eligibility to communication scripts for reaching out to college coaches.

One Last Thing

The families that handle recruiting well all share one trait: they stay calm. Recruiting is not a sprint, and it doesn't reward panic. It rewards consistent, well-documented development, genuine program fit, and an athlete who competes the same way whether a coach is watching or not.

Start the timeline. Build the profile. Do the work.