



8 Tips for Volleyball Athletes from a former Division I Recruiter

When you work hard, the recruitment process should be exciting and energizing. But what should athletes do to feel like they're making progress toward their goals? Former coach and recruiting coordinator at the University of Kansas and UCLA, Kaitlin Nielsen, shares insight from her time scouting and contacting players. Keep these tips in mind as you jumpstart your journey to the next level.

1. Be proactive.

If you don't hear back from a recruiter right away, that's completely normal. Depending on your age, there are strict NCAA rules that limit when and how college coaches can respond. What matters most is that you take ownership of the parts you *can* control, and you already have powerful tools in your Hudl account to move your recruiting forward.

Make sure your highlights and Hudl profile are updated before the season starts, and refresh them as you grow throughout the year. When a coach searches for you, your profile will showcase all the information they need!

Continue reaching out to programs you're genuinely interested in. Include your new highlight videos so coaches can track your progress. A consistent rhythm—whether that's every two weeks, once a month, or after major tournaments—keeps your name on their radar and reinforces your steady interest in their program.

2. Include parents the right way.

It's important to remember that the core relationship in recruiting is the one between the athlete and their future coaches. That connection is what ultimately shapes their experience at the next level.

With that said, parents play a meaningful role, as partners, in the entire recruiting journey.

College coaches often say they're "recruiting the whole family," and that's true. They know an athlete's success, well-being, and smooth transition to college are strongly influenced by the strength and support of their family.

Parents can help by opening conversations about what types of schools might truly fit athletically, academically, geographically, and financially. Your perspective often brings clarity that your athlete might not yet have.

You can also assist behind the scenes: helping organize highlight videos, keeping track of outbound messages, and ensuring communication stays consistent. Supporting scheduling, whether it's calls, campus visits, or attending matches, can also take stress off your athlete and keep the process moving.

Pro Tip: All emails should come directly from the athlete's email address and reflect *their* voice. It's natural to want to help, but resist the urge to take over their writing. Coaches want to hear from the athletes themselves; it's their first window into who they are beyond the court.

3. Ask recruiters questions that make you stand out.

Coaches are often asked basic (yet important) questions, but asking the same questions as everyone else can result in a canned answer. Try asking questions that are more unique to *your* priorities and curiosities. What academic programs have you researched at their institution that you have questions about? When you visualize yourself on campus, what are you most excited about, and what are you most nervous about? Dive into the things that light you up! Thoughtful, specific questions make the conversation more meaningful for you and far more memorable and enjoyable for the coach.

4. Avoid this recruiting red flag.

Pay close attention to your body language; it sends loud, immediate messages to coaches about the kind of competitor, teammate and player you'll be in their program.

Coaches know that athletes will experience a spectrum of emotions during a competition. What they are looking for is how athletes respond to setbacks, mistakes and challenges. If you or a teammate makes an error, do you move toward the group or pull away? When there's a bad call, do you show resilience or let it derail you? These moments tell coaches everything about your mindset.

Remember, coaches spend a *lot* of time with their athletes. They gravitate toward players who love competing, support their teammates, keep a positive attitude, and bounce back quickly from setbacks. Your body language can show all of that, often before you ever say a word.

5. Put yourself in the place you want to go.

Stay tuned in to the college game at the level you hope to play. If you can, go watch a match in person to get a feel for the atmosphere, the crowd, and the overall energy. If attending isn't possible, make a point to watch games on TV or online.

As you watch, look beyond the action on the court. Pay attention to the bench, how the coaches interact with their athletes, and how the players support one another. Those details reveal a lot about the program's culture.

You want to choose a community where you can thrive, both as a player and as a person. Taking the time to observe these things helps you understand whether a program truly aligns with what you're looking for.

6. Stay top-of-mind during the high school season.

During the high school season, be patient with recruiters, as this is also their season and the busiest time of year for them. The best thing you can do is send one to two emails a month to stay on their radar and keep them up to date with your progress. Include your highlights, any season triumphs or fun stats, and a fun fact about yourself or a shout-out about their team's recent success.

7. Remember these tournament do's and don'ts.

Coaches are not just watching your performance, they're paying attention to how you carry yourself throughout the day. They notice how you interact with your coaches, your parents, and your teammates, because they are imagining how you will behave at the college level. College coaches are looking for athletes who are respectful, independent, and consistent both on and off the court.

Another key moment they observe is when you're refereeing or on the sidelines. How you approach these responsibilities reflects your mindset and work ethic: "how we do something is how we do everything." Be fully engaged, focused, and ready to give your best at every tournament, regardless of your role. Consistency and professionalism leave a lasting impression.

8. Take these steps before, during, and after Nationals.

- a. **Before:** Send a clear, professional email to the coaches with your basic information, a highlight video, and details about your upcoming tournament, where and when you'll be playing. This gives them context and makes it easy for them to follow your performance
- b. **During:** Focus on the game. College coaches are evaluating your potential, but they're also watching how you respond to challenges. Show resilience, a strong work ethic, and how you contribute to the team under pressure.
- c. **After:** Share a highlight reel of your best plays, including moments that showcase your personality and leadership. Follow up with the coaches to thank them for

watching and reinforce your interest in their program. Consistent, thoughtful communication demonstrates professionalism and maturity.

Follow [**@HudlVolleyball**](#) on Instagram for more tips and tricks year-round on how to make the most of your recruitment. And best of luck! We want to hear all about it. Be sure to share your highlights on socials and tag us so we can see and share your best moments.