

How to Make Your Child Stand Out (Q&A Tips)

Whether your athlete is a middle schooler or high school junior, aiming for local or national exposure, there are key steps to help them shine. Below are **five actionable tips** for both parents and players to make a young athlete stand out:

- 1. Create an Impressive Highlight Reel:** A well-crafted highlight video is often the first thing coaches look for. Start gathering quality game footage early (even in 7th–9th grade) so you can compile a short **3–5 minute reel** by sophomore or junior year. Feature the athlete’s best plays in the first 30 seconds to grab attention, and include variety (offense, defense, technical skills) to show they’re well-rounded. Make sure the video is high-quality (steady camera, clear view) and includes the athlete’s name, graduation year, and contact info at the start. **Why it matters:** Coaches use highlight reels to save time – players who include a video in their profile are *12 times more likely* to be viewed by college coaches than those without one. Parents can help by filming games (or hiring a service) and ensuring the best clips make the cut, while athletes should focus on performing their best each game for future footage.
- 2. Build a Strong Academic Profile:** Academic performance is a huge part of standing out as a recruit. Encourage your child to maintain good grades and take challenging courses – not only does this keep college options open, it signals discipline and reliability to coaches. In fact, coaches often say that if a player is **academically sound, their options are limitless** in choosing a school. While not every recruit needs a 4.0 GPA, showing pride in academics (honor roll, academic awards, solid test scores for older players) can set your athlete apart from equally talented peers. Parents can support by helping with time management or tutoring, and athletes should treat academics like part of their training. A strong academic reputation assures coaches that the player will remain eligible and succeed in college classes, making them a safer pick for recruitment.
- 3. Leverage Showcase Events and Camps:** **Exposure** is key – the more chances coaches have to see a player, the more likely they are to recruit them. For **younger athletes (7th–10th grade)**, focus on skill-development camps and local tournaments to improve fundamentals and gain experience. As the athlete matures (sophomore to junior year), strategically attend exposure camps, combines, or showcases where college scouts will be present. These events let players **perform in front of multiple coaches at once**, especially national showcases or elite camps for high-level prospects. Be selective and choose events that match your child’s skill level and target schools – for example, a regional showcase or a college camp at a school on their list. **Perform your best** and even showcase intangibles like hustle and attitude (coaches notice how players interact with teammates and handle pressure during events). Parents can help by researching reputable events and getting the athlete to them, but remember that as the athlete gets older, coaches primarily focus on upperclassmen at showcases. So plan for major exposure events around **junior year** when it counts most.

4. **Maintain a Positive Social Media Presence:** In today’s recruiting landscape, an athlete’s online presence can be their **digital résumé**. Over 70% of college coaches use social media to evaluate recruits during the scouting process. Make sure your child’s profiles (Twitter, Instagram, etc.) are clean, **professional, and showcase their best self**. Athletes (with parental guidance for younger ones) should share highlights of games or training sessions, academic achievements, and updates like upcoming tournaments – this shows coaches how they train, compete, and conduct themselves. It’s smart to include key info in bios or pinned posts (grad year, positions, school/club, GPA if strong, and a link to their highlight reel) to make it easy for recruiters to learn about them at a glance. Equally important, **avoid any negative or inappropriate content** – no trash-talk, profanity, or questionable posts, even on private accounts. Coaches want players who will represent their program well, so one social media mistake can ruin an opportunity. Parents can monitor and remind athletes that everything online is public. A consistent, positive social presence can reinforce your athlete’s brand and keep them on coaches’ radars for the right reasons.

5. **Network and Build Relationships:** Opportunities often come from **who knows you** as much as what you can do. Networking in the sports community can increase your child’s chances of being recruited. Both players and parents should be proactive here. Encourage your athlete to introduce themselves to coaches at camps or after games, ask questions, and **show genuine interest** in college programs. A polite email to a coach can go a long way – have your child send a personalized message expressing interest in their program, with a brief intro and a link to their highlight reel (parents can help draft or proofread, but the athlete should hit “send” to show ownership). Maintain these connections: for example, your athlete can email coaches updates each season (new stats, academic achievements, tournament schedules). Parents can leverage their own networks too – often high school or club coaches have contacts, so build good relationships with them and let them know your child’s goals. Remember that coaches ultimately want to hear from the student-athlete, so use parents’ influence **strategically in the background** (e.g. helping schedule visits or asking about scholarships, but not answering for the athlete). By creating a supportive network of coaches, mentors, and peers, your child gains advocates who can recommend or introduce them to opportunities. Networking isn’t one-time – it’s an ongoing effort to stay on coaches’ radar, seek guidance, and demonstrate enthusiasm. It can lead to mentorship, advice, and insider knowledge that give your athlete an edge in the competitive recruiting process.

By focusing on these five areas – a standout highlight reel, solid academics, smart use of showcases, a clean social media footprint, and active networking – **you and your child can significantly boost their visibility and appeal** to coaches and scouts. It’s a team effort: the athlete must put in the work and take initiative, and parents provide guidance and resources. Together, you can help your young athlete truly stand out from the crowd in their journey to the next level.