



THE FAMILY GUIDE TO
**College Volleyball Camps
& Recruiting**

*An honest, step-by-step walkthrough for the athlete
who wants to play in college — and the family helping her get there.*

Prepared for Storm Performance Volleyball families

Current as of July 2026

How to use this guide

This is the guide we wish every family had before their first summer of camps. It walks you through the whole journey, from the pile of invites in your inbox to a smart, to the affordable plan built around the schools that actually fit your daughter.

Read it start to finish once. Then keep it handy as a **toolkit**. Scattered through these pages, and gathered again at the back, are fill-in worksheets you can print and reuse: a school-list tracker, an "is this invite real?" checker, a camp scorecard, coach email templates, and a true-cost budget planner. Anywhere you see the ★ **TOOLKIT** mark, that's a page built to be used, not just read.

One promise before we start

You are not behind. You are not missing a secret everyone else knows. The camp world is loud and confusing on purpose. Feeling lost in it isn't a mistake, it's a sign you're paying attention. Let's make it simple.

If you read one page, read this — your summer in five steps

1. **Breathe.** The invites aren't a deadline, they're a starting point.
2. **Build the school list first.** Places she'd love even without volleyball.
3. **Read each invite.** Real interest, or a mailing list? When unsure, have her write back and ask.
4. **Pick a few camps that fit that list.** The right ones for her grade and level.
5. **Go prepared, compete, and follow up.** Then judge honestly, and adjust.

The rest of this guide unpacks each step — with worksheets to make them easy.

What's inside

1. Start here: take a breath	3
2. The honest conversation about level	4
3. Build your school list first	6
4. Decode the invites	8
5. Know the camp types	9
6. Score any camp before you pay	10
7. Your year-by-year game plan	11
8. Do it right: before, during & after	12
9. Talking to coaches: email templates	13
10. Build a responsible budget	14
11. The Storm bottom line	15

1. Start here: take a breath

Here's how it usually goes. A parent sits down across from us, slides a phone across the desk, and says: "She wants to play in college. She's gotten a few invites. We have no idea what to do with any of it." If that's you, you're in exactly the right place and everything from here is answerable.

Before any of the how-to, three ideas that make the whole summer feel different.

An invitation is not the same as interest

Colleges run camps to develop and evaluate players — and to make money. To fill them, schools email big mailing lists pulled from tournaments and recruiting sites. Under the rules, camp invitations, brochures, and questionnaires can go out to anyone, at any age, at any time. That flattering "Elite Prospect Day" email? A coach who is truly recruiting your daughter and a coach who has never seen her play can send the exact same one.

This isn't a reason to be cynical. It's a reason to relax. Once you know an invite is a **starting line, not a verdict**, you stop treating every email like a decision you must make tonight. You get to be the one asking the questions.

Start with the school, not the camp

The question to circle twice: **Would this be a great school for her even if she never played a single point of volleyball there?**

If the academics, cost, location, size, and feel of the place aren't right, it doesn't matter how good the camp is. The best opportunity isn't the biggest name. It's the place where she'd thrive as a student and a person, with volleyball layered on top. Camps are a tool to get in front of the right schools. Build the school list first; the camps follow from it.

Know what you're actually paying for

The most common way families waste a summer is buying one thing while believing it's another. Before you register, name which of these you're after:

- **Getting better** — reps, sharper skills, a taste of college training. Valuable. Just don't mistake it for recruiting.
- **Getting seen** — a specific college staff watching her, on purpose.
- **Getting to know a program** — her and a staff learning whether they fit.
- **Checking out a campus** — walking the place, doing the math on cost and feel.

Every one is a legitimate reason to go. A great skills camp is worth every penny — as a skills camp. Trouble only starts when you pay development money expecting a recruiting result. Name the goal before you swipe the card, and half the confusion evaporates.

2. The honest conversation about level

This is the part most guides skip, and it's the one that saves families the most money and heartache. Before you chase any camp, get honest about where your daughter realistically fits, because that answer changes everything about which camps are worth it.

The divisions, in plain language

Level	What it's really like	Scholarships & timing
NCAA D1	The most competitive and the earliest-recruiting level. Deep talent, big time commitment, national travel.	As of 2025–26, up to 18 roster spots can receive full or partial aid (see below). Recruits early.
NCAA D2	Still highly competitive, often a bit more balance between athletics, academics, and life.	Athletic aid available (partial/equivalency). Recruits a bit later than D1.
NCAA D3	Real, competitive volleyball at schools that put academics first. Often excellent aid packages.	No athletic scholarships — but academic & need-based aid can be very strong. Finalizes rosters later.
NAIA	Smaller schools, competition often compared to D2. Flexible, personal recruiting.	Equivalency scholarships (up to ~8). Coaches have a lot of freedom; recruit later.
JUCO	Two-year college. A strong path for late bloomers, transfers, or a fresh academic start.	Varies by state/division. Often a bridge to a four-year program.

Aiming where she'll play is not settling — it's smart

A great D3 or D2 fit, one where she competes, contributes, gets a degree she wants, and loves her four years, is one that beats riding the bench at a bigger name almost every time. A lot of camp marketing quietly preys on the dream of the logo. Don't let it talk you out of the fit.

How to figure out where she fits (without a made-up chart)

You'll see websites promising the exact height or jump-touch you “need” for each division. We don't hand out those charts. That's the kind of thing that goes stale, varies wildly by program, and turns a kid into a spreadsheet. Here's the better method, and it's free:

- **Read the roster** of a school she likes. Look at the players in her position — their height, their club backgrounds.
- **Watch a match or two** online. Does she look like she belongs in that gym now or could, with a realistic year or two of growth?
- **Be honest** — not harsh, not falsely humble. That gut check, done truthfully, is worth more than any benchmark table.
- **Ask us** — pulling up rosters together is one of the most useful things we do with families.

A rough gut check: if she's within a couple of inches of the players in her position on that roster and played similar-level club ball, she's likely in range. A big gap isn't failure. It just means aim at a level where the roster looks more like her. Positions differ, too: liberos and defensive specialists are often shorter; middles and pins taller. And for younger athletes, growth and development can still change the picture.

The 2025–26 change worth knowing

Starting in 2025–26, NCAA Division I women's volleyball moved to an **equivalency model with an 18-player roster cap**. Previously programs could award only 12 full rides; now all 18 rostered athletes can receive full or partial aid. That's more scholarship money in play. It's good news, especially for defensive specialists and role players. But rosters are capped, competition for spots is tighter, and coaches lean harder on measurables and how athletes carry themselves at camp. One caveat: not every school has opted into the new system yet, so “18 scholarships” isn't universal. It's a fair, direct question to ask any coach.

Don't forget the classroom

At many schools, especially academically selective D1s and most of D3, recruiting runs through admissions. If she can't clear the school's general admission bar, a coach's hands may be tied no matter how she plays. Keep her grades and core courses on track, and register with the NCAA Eligibility Center. (As a rule of thumb, D1 asks for a minimum core-course GPA around 2.3 and D2 around 2.2, but always verify the current requirements directly.)

3. Build your school list first

Everything downstream — which camps, which emails, which trips — flows from a good target list. Aim for roughly 15–30 schools to start, spread across levels, every one a place she'd be happy to attend without volleyball. Then narrow by fit and by whether the program actually has a need in her position and class.

For each school, ask: Is the academic path right? Is the *net* price realistic for us? Is the level honest for her? And is the staff even recruiting her position in her graduation year? Use the tracker below to keep it all in one place.

Not sure where to start your list?

Build it from a few angles, then let the list grow:

- **By level** — be honest about D1/D2/D3/NAIA/JUCO (see Part 2), and include a mix, not just the dream schools.
- **By region & size** — how far from home is okay? Big university or small college? Rule things in and out early.
- **By major** — start with schools that actually offer what she wants to study. Volleyball ends; the degree doesn't.
- **By real cost** — every college has a free “Net Price Calculator” on its website. Net price is what you'd actually pay after aid and scholarships — not the sticker price. Run it before you fall in love.
- **By watching & asking** — note programs whose rosters and style fit her, and ask your club coaches for schools you haven't thought of.

★ TOOLKIT — Target School List Tracker

School	Div.	Acad. fit?	\$ fit?	Pos. need?	Contact yet?	Camp date

Tip: mark “academic fit” and “\$ fit” honestly with a simple Y / N / Maybe. A school that's a No on either of those is a No overall, no matter how good the volleyball looks.

4. Decode the invites

Since an invitation isn't proof of interest, the real skill is telling a genuine one from a mailing list. You do it by reading the words. Here's the tell-tale difference:

Probably a mailing list	Probably real interest
• “Dear Student-Athlete” or an obvious mail-merge name	• Written to her — names her position, club, or a play they saw
• Nothing specific about her game, film, or class year	• Mentions a need in her graduation class, or asks about her
• Heavy urgency (“spots filling fast!”), no sign they know her	• When you reply with a real question, an actual human answers
• No personal reply when you write back	• They've contacted her club or high-school coach about her

You don't have to guess — write back and ask

A short, respectful email tells you almost everything: “Are you currently recruiting my position in the class of ____? Have you had a chance to see my film? Based on that, do you think your camp is the right level for me?” A coach with real interest engages. A form letter goes quiet. Either answer is useful.

★ TOOLKIT — “Is this invite real?” checker

School / camp: _____ Date: _____

Check every box that's true of the email you received:

- ☐ It uses her actual name (not “Student-Athlete”).
- ☐ It references her position, club, film, or a specific match.
- ☐ It mentions a roster need in her graduation class.
- ☐ A real person replied when we asked a question.
- ☐ The coach has contacted her club/HS coach about her.

0–1 boxes: treat it as marketing.

2–3 boxes: possible interest — reply and ask before spending.

4–5 boxes: real interest — this camp may be a smart next step (if the school also fits).

5. Know the camp types

Not every camp does the same job. Skill camps and clinics make her better; ID camps, showcases, and combines get her seen. Both of these matter, just always know which one you're paying for. (Costs are typical ranges and vary by school and region.)

Type	Typical cost	What it's for	Recruiting value
Skill development	\$100–\$350	Fundamentals & high reps across a wide age range	Low as recruiting; high for development
Position clinic	\$75–\$200	Deep technical work for one position	Moderate; depends on staff & prior interest
University ID / prospect	\$150–\$650+	Live evaluation by that school's own staff	High with prior contact; low if random
Showcase / combine	\$150–\$400	Verified measurables + exposure to many schools	Variable — confirm who actually attends
Mega camp	\$250–\$500	Access to a big network (often D2/D3/NAIA)	Good for options; hard to stand out

One quality check that cuts through the hype

Ask about the coach-to-athlete ratio and court space. Big groups, long lines, and half-court drills mean fewer meaningful reps, no matter how prestigious the name on the banner. Two well-run camps beat ten crowded ones.

6. Score any camp before you pay

Instead of deciding on gut and prestige, run each camp through this 100-point scorecard. Fill in a score for each row, add them up, and let the number guide you. Notice that fit and genuine coach interest carry the most weight, because they're what actually turn a camp into an opportunity.

How to score each row: give the full points for a clear yes, about half for mixed or unsure, and zero for a clear no or a real problem. When you're torn, score low. This card rewards honesty, not optimism. Two anchors worth remembering: *Coach interest* earns its 20 only if a coach has communicated about her personally (not a mass email), and *Athletic fit* earns its 20 only if she looks like players already on that roster.

★ TOOLKIT — The 100-Point Camp Scorecard

School / camp: _____ Date: _____

Category	Ask yourself	Max	You
Academic / personal fit	Would she choose this school without volleyball? Right major, size, setting, culture?	20	
Financial fit	What's the likely net price? Is the travel + camp cost responsible?	15	
Athletic fit	Is her current and projected level realistic for this program?	20	
Position / roster need	Is the staff recruiting her position in her graduation class?	15	
Coach interest	Have they watched film, replied personally, or referenced her specifically?	20	
Camp structure / value	Will the actual decision-makers coach her, with enough reps to be seen?	10	
TOTAL		100	

80–100	High priority. Strong fit, credible interest, clear reason to go.
65–79	Maybe. Attend only after resolving the weakest category with the coach.
50–64	Low priority. You're probably paying for hope or exposure, not a real evaluation.
Below 50	Pass. Put the money toward film, training, tournament travel, or better-fit schools.

7. Your year-by-year game plan

The right summer looks completely different depending on how far along she is. Find her row — that's her plan.

Stage	Main goal	Best camps	Avoid
Rising 9th / 10th	Get better; fall in love with the game	Local skills & position camps with good ratios	National travel for prestige
Rising 11th	Targeted evaluation & relationships	Prospect camps at a few researched targets you've emailed	Shotgunning camps with no research
Rising 12th (uncommitted)	Find programs with real openings	Camps where staff confirmed a need; verified multi-school events	Schools done recruiting her class
Committed	Prep for college; protect health	Developmental training approved by her future staff	Overloading the schedule

Two dates that anchor everything

June 15 after sophomore year is the first day D1 and D2 coaches can contact her directly. That means real conversations tend to start right after. (D3, NAIA, and JUCO can talk sooner.)

August 1 before junior year is when official and unofficial D1 visits can begin. And remember: D3, NAIA, and JUCO often finalize rosters later, so senior-year opportunities are real. She can email coaches at any time. There's no rule against reaching out early.

One thing that trips families up: coaches can watch and evaluate her long before these dates. They just can't contact her directly yet. So when we say D1 "recruits early," it means they're quietly building their list years before they're allowed to call.

8. Do it right: before, during & after

Before — put her on the radar

Coaches focus their attention on prospects they already know. Email the staff 7–14 days ahead so they'll look for her. Set three simple goals for the weekend: communicate, compete on every ball, and respond well to correction. Arrive healthy. Don't have any dramatic last-minute training spikes.

During — they watch far more than her hitting percentage

- **Skill:** first-contact quality, serving pressure, set location, attack range, blocking movement, decisions.
- **Competitiveness:** effort on ordinary reps, response after a mistake, willingness to take hard assignments.
- **Coachability:** eye contact, listening, applying a correction on the very next rep, no excuses.
- **Communication & character:** calling seams, helping teammates, composure, and how she treats everyone when no drill is being scored.

A quiet word for the sidelines

Coaches watch parents, too, and negative sideline behavior can end their interest in a great prospect. Three rules: don't coach from the stands, don't corner staff about playing time or scholarships during the camp, and model good sportsmanship. The best thing you can do at a camp is be warm, be calm, and let her play.

After — close the loop within 24 hours

Send a short, specific thank-you, and ask the honest question: where do I fit, what should I work on, and are you still recruiting my position and class? Log the answer. Specific next steps matter far more than compliments. Remember, she's evaluating the college too.

9. Talking to coaches: email templates

Recruits can email coaches at any time (coaches just can't always reply until the rules allow). Keep it short, specific, and easy to act on. Copy these, fill the brackets, and send.

One important thing: these come from her, not from you. Coaches want to hear from the athlete herself as it signals maturity and real interest. Help her draft them, then let her hit send.

★ TOOLKIT — Three emails you can send today

1. First introduction (get on the radar — send any time)

Subject: [Grad Year] [Position] — [Full Name] | [GPA / key metric] | Video inside

Coach [Last Name],

My name is [Name], a [grad year] [position] with [club / high school]. I'm very interested in [College] because of [specific academic or personal reason].

A few quick details: height ___, position ___, GPA ___, club & jersey ___. My highlight video and recruiting profile: [links].

Are you currently recruiting my position in the class of [year]? I'd love to be on your radar and would welcome any feedback on my film.

Thank you for your time, [Name] — [phone] | [email]

2. Before a camp (you've registered or are deciding)

Coach [Last Name],

I'm planning to attend your [date] prospect camp and wanted to introduce myself first. I'm a [grad year] [position] with [club]. Based on my film [link], do you think the camp is the right level for me, and is your staff recruiting my position in my class?

Anything you'd like me to send ahead of time so you can evaluate me accurately? Looking forward to it.

Thank you, [Name]

3. After a camp (within 24 hours)

Coach [Last Name],

Thank you for the chance to attend camp. I especially appreciated [specific coaching point or conversation] it helped me understand your training environment and what your program values.

I remain very interested in [College]. When you have a moment, I'd appreciate an honest evaluation of where I currently fit and what I should keep developing. Are you still recruiting a [position] in the [grad year] class, and is there a next step you'd recommend?

Thank you, [Name]

10. Build a responsible budget

The registration fee is only part of the cost. Add up the whole trip before you commit, then spend on purpose. Prioritize two to five high-fit prospect camps, one or two strong developmental events, and keep budget left for quality film, tournament travel, and campus visits. Two well-chosen camps beat ten random ones.

★ TOOLKIT — True-Cost Planner (per camp)

Cost line	Camp A	Camp B
Registration fee	\$	\$
Travel (gas / flights)	\$	\$
Lodging	\$	\$
Meals	\$	\$
Parking / rental / misc.	\$	\$
Parent time off work	\$	\$
TOTAL	\$	\$

Reality check: if a camp's true cost is high but its scorecard is low, that's your answer. Spend where she can actually be seen by a school that fits.

11. The Storm bottom line

Camps aren't lottery tickets. They're investments. The families who get the most out of summer aren't the ones who attend the most camps; they're the ones who pick a few right ones on purpose.

- **Start with the college, not the camp.** The camp is only worthwhile if the school itself is a legitimate option.
- **Don't confuse an invitation with interest.** Look for personal communication tied to film, position, class, and roster need.
- **Use film first, then ask direct questions.** A respectful question about fit and need can save you thousands.
- **Choose quality over quantity — and protect health and confidence.** More exposure isn't always better.
- **Track outcomes, and remember it's a match, not a ranking.** The best opportunity is where she'll truly thrive.



Where a club comes in

Everything in this guide you can start on your own and you should. But this work goes faster, and lands better, with people doing it beside you: coaches who'll pull up rosters with you, tell you the honest truth about level, and help her build film and emails that actually get seen. That's what a great club is really for.

If you're near us, come see what the Storm family is about and check out our tryouts and find out what hands-on development and recruiting support feels like. If you're not close, find a club near you that does this work too. Your daughter deserves people in her corner.

www.ccstormvolleyball.com

You've got this and you don't have to do it alone.

— *The Storm Performance Volleyball Staff*

A note on accuracy

Recruiting rules, calendars, and scholarship limits change. This guide is current as of July 2026 and is educational only. It does not guarantee recruitment, admission, roster placement, scholarship aid, or playing time. Always confirm current rules through the NCAA Eligibility Center and each college's compliance office. Sources include USA Volleyball, the NCAA, the AVCA, and NCSA.