

Donovan Tennis Strategies

Sample Letters to College Coaches

In general, the initial contact letter to coaches should consist of approximately 6 concise paragraphs, each highlighting aspects of you, your education, your tennis and your college goals. Though the order in which you present your information can be flexible, the suggested content of the paragraphs is as follows:

An introduction of yourself and a statement about why you are interested in the school and see it as a potential fit for you (size, region, offering of majors, division, history of tennis program, academic reputation, legacy, etc.)

A snapshot of your academic credentials

A brief record of your tennis standings (TRN rating and ranking, Universal Tennis Rating (UTR), ITF ranking, match record and/or any recent significant results from tournament play, including strong doubles results)

A description of your strengths/weapons as a player, and elements of your game that you are working on to improve before you play college tennis

Conversation about intangible elements you offer on and off the court such as your work ethic, your psychological and emotional state on the court, your enthusiasm and energy, your level of passion for tennis, any team-oriented or leadership skills you may bring to a team setting, etc.

A request for more information on the school, the athletic program, and any scholarship assistance that might be available (should that school offer scholarships)

Other items you may want to consider adding to your letter if they apply:

- *An announcement of your upcoming tournament schedule in case the coach is able to come to watch you play*
- *A statement of an approaching unofficial visit to campus and a request to meet with the coach while you are there*
- *A link to your tennis video and player profile/resume, if available*

IMPORTANT: *Within these guidelines you should **BE ORIGINAL** in describing yourself and capturing what you would bring to a team. **Please avoid copying the sample letters word for word.** Rather, use them as a guide to give ideas on how to approach each section. Use your own words, voice, tone and examples. Personalizing the style of your letter will allow the coach to get a truer sense of you, and make your communication seem less like an impersonal form letter. Your effort to create a more personalized letter will go a long way creating positive attention from the coaches.*

College Recruiting Letter **Do's** and **Don'ts** Checklist

Do:

- Use the **provided sample letters** as a guide to get ideas on how to approach the writing of your letter.
- **Double check** to make sure that school names and coaches' names match!
- **Include all the basic elements** expected in a letter: tennis stats/results/strengths, academic information including GPA and test scores, personal intangible offerings to a team, reasons for interest in a school.
- **Research the schools and programs on-line** so that you may be able to include a comment that shows you've done your homework on the specific school and program.
- **Be honest in your statements and assessments** of your academic standing and your tennis results.
- **Try to keep you letter to one page**, or close to one page.
- **Submit your letter to DTS** for proof-reading and any suggested edits before sending it out.
- **E-mail your player profile/resume** along with the letter so that coaches can see and refer to your information in two different formats.
- **Be creative and be yourself** in the tone, content and style of your letter so that the coach gets a true sense of who YOU are and what YOU offer.
- If applicable, **mention any upcoming visits to campus or area tournaments** you are playing in so that a coach may have the chance to meet you or see you play in person.
- **Pace yourself** when e-mailing your letters out. You don't have to e-mail all the letters on the same exact day. Set a goal for sending a certain number of e-mails each day or every few days. This will allow you to avoid rushing and making mistakes.
- **Record on your Recruiting Navigator page** when you have sent your letter to a school. This will help you and DTS stay up to date and organized about where you stand in the process with each school.

Don't:

- **Address the letter simply "Dear Coach"** and send the exact same letter to every school without any personalization to the school and program.
- **Copy the sample letter** word for word which will not give the coach a true sense of your unique accomplishments, goals, and personality.
- **Rush** in sending the letters out which can inevitably lead to mistakes such as the coaches' names and schools not matching up, etc.
- **Send the letters without proof-reading** from DTS.
- **Stretch the truth**, exaggerate or misrepresent any of your academic or tennis accomplishments.

Sample 1:

Dear Coach____, (always personalize with the coach's last name)

My name is____and I am currently a junior at__High School. My GPA to date is 3.5 in an honors curriculum. I recently took the SATs and scored 1310 (610 on the math section, 700 on the reading section). My academic interests lie in the math and sciences areas. I'm hoping to find a school that is strong in these areas and also has a competitive tennis program. (This paragraph offers the academic snapshot and statement of what he/she is looking for in a college.)

I've been playing tennis since I was 9 years old and have been competing in USTA events since the age of 11. My training normally consists of practice 5 days a week, tournaments twice a month and off-court conditioning, with sprints and weight training, twice a week. Currently you will find me as a__-star player ranked #____on TennisRecruiting.net. My Universal Tennis Rating is_____. Hopefully, as I continue to play national tournaments over the next year, I will reach my goal of getting into the top _____ in the TRN national rankings, and _____ on UTR. (This paragraph clearly covers tennis standings that coaches will be most interested in.)

My weapons as a player are my serve and forehand. I've been working very hard the past 6 months on my transition to the net. When I hit an aggressive forehand and get my opponent in trouble I'm learning to move forward and finish the point with a volley. I've also been mixing in an occasional serve and volley. Becoming more comfortable at net has dramatically improved my doubles results. I've played five doubles events this year, winning two and getting to at least the semi-finals in the others. (Good specific self-assessment of strengths of the player's game and what they are continuing to work on. Aside from mentioning actual strokes or shots, this section could also refer to assets such as fitness level, footwork, endurance, power, point strategies, etc.)

My greatest strength, I feel, is my work ethic. You will always see me giving 100% effort in every match and every practice session. Getting to play college tennis excites me because I'll be surrounded by a team of good players and will be getting more coaching than I ever have. My goal is to make the starting line-up in both singles and doubles as a freshman. I'm looking forward to working hard on my game over the next year to achieve that goal.

(This paragraph gives the coach a sense of the type of person, not just the level of player, they will be getting for their team. It provides a portrait of the player's personal energy, enthusiasm, commitment and passion to tennis and the team setting.)

I noticed on the website that your team had a great season last year and qualified for the NCAA tournament. Congratulations on that and on being named Coach of the Year in your conference. I'd be thrilled to be a part of such an exciting tennis environment. (Personalization!)

I have attached my player profile so that you have all my contact and tennis information, and I will update you on my progress over the next several months. It would be great to get any information from you regarding _____ College/University and its tennis program. I look forward to hearing from you and hope to be able to visit your campus in the future, too. (Good conclusion asking for further contact and information.)

Sincerely,

Name

Contact Info

Sample 2:

Dear Coach____, (Personalization!)

My name is____and I just finished my sophomore year at_____High School in__City,____State. I have followed your tennis program at_____University and I am really interested in attending your school and being part of your team. (This offers a clear introduction and statement of interest in the specific school. However, it could potentially say more about why the player is interested in the school and might be a fit for the program.)

My current Universal Tennis Rating is____. Ever since I qualified for the 12's National Hard Court Championships, National Clay Court Championships and the Northeast Zonal Team, I have traveled around the United States and Europe playing in many USTA and non-sanctioned tournaments. In 2014, I won the Paris Open when I was 14 years old. (This paragraph highlights unique accomplishments in tennis that a coach would be excited by, but results from more recent play would say more about the current level. This would also be the appropriate place to add in TRN ranking and stars, and/or any ITF rankings.)

I feel one of my greatest strengths as a player is my versatility on the court. My ground strokes are very strong and consistent; however, I am also very comfortable at the net. My volleys are precise and I have been told by many coaches that I have "great hands." This is one of my assets I try to incorporate in both my singles as well as doubles play. My freshman year of high school, I partnered with a top nationally ranked USTA player; we won our section, we won our region, and went on to win the state title. This year, I partnered with a much weaker player and we still advanced to the state finals. Next year I'm likely to play number 1 singles and my goal is to win the state title in singles. (This paragraph gives the coach a more personal, in-depth sense of the player's game and strengths beyond just rankings and results.)

My attitude is more of an asset than my game itself. I always keep each match I play in a certain perspective. While winning is important, I try to focus on working hard and on enjoying the competition. Taking care of those things will usually lead to positive results. I absolutely LOVE the game of tennis and have been told for years what a great and happy spirit I bring to the court. I was honored to receive the Sportsmanship award for my Zonal Team this past summer in San Diego, CA. (Any coach would love to get this very detailed and personalized picture of this player's energy, excitement, confidence, and mental and emotional commitment to competitive tennis. It suggests the potential positive influence this player could have on the team.)

In addition to working extremely hard on my tennis game, I work even harder on my studies. I am not what one would call "naturally gifted" academically. Throughout my high school career, however, I have chosen to take all honors courses (except history/social studies) and have recently been nominated for the National Honor Society as well as the National Society for High School Scholars maintaining a 3.6 G.P.A. I will be taking the ACT in the fall and am hoping to score in the high 20's. Depending on how I do I may decide to also take the SAT, but this summer I'm going to focus my preparation on the ACT. In college, I will be pursuing a degree in Education in hopes of fulfilling my lifelong dream of teaching. (Very thorough and honest presentation of the player's academic standing.)

I sincerely believe that__University is an excellent fit for me due to size and location as well as academic and athletic competitiveness. I look forward to hearing from you in the near future and hope I will have the opportunity to further discuss my future on your tennis team. I will let you know when I will be on campus for a visit. (The conclusion offers a clear summary restating why the player is interested in the specific school and program and is clear about hoping to hear back from the coach.)

Sincerely,

Name

Contact Info