



THE NIL ROOKIE PLAYBOOK

A starter guide for athletes who don't know where to begin

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1 WHAT NIL ACTUALLY MEANS IN 2026

NIL (Name, Image & Likeness) allows athletes to earn money from their personal brand.

The three primary ways college athletes earn income today are:

- ▣ **Brand Deals** – partnerships with companies and businesses.
 - ▣ **Collectives** – organizations that compensate athletes for NIL activities.
 - ▣ **Revenue Share (Division I only)** – direct payments from participating schools.
- NIL is not pay-for-play and comes with business, tax, and compliance responsibilities.

2 THE 5 TYPES OF DEALS ANY ATHLETE CAN GET

Build a diversified NIL strategy to maximize earnings.

- 1 Brand Sponsorships**
Partner with local businesses or niche products that value your highly engaged local audience over a massive follower count.
- 2 Content Creation**
Get paid by brands to create social media posts, reels, or videos promoting their products to your peers.
- 3 Personal Appearances**
Earn high payouts by leveraging your hometown popularity to host youth camps, sign autographs, or speak at local events.
- 4 Merchandise & Apparel**
Launch your own clothing line or collaborate with an existing brand to sell customized gear with zero upfront inventory costs.
- 5 Digital Products**
Create a training template, recruiting guide, or e-book once, then sell it online infinitely with zero overhead.

3 WHAT BRANDS ACTUALLY VALUE

Follower count is not the most important factor.

- 1 Engagement (Most Important)**
Likes + comments compared to followers. Active audiences matter more than big, silent ones.
- 2 Consistency**
Brands want athletes who show up regularly. Posting consistently builds trust and makes you marketable.
- 3 Niche Fit (Who Your Audience Is)**
Brands want the *right audience*, not just a big one. Clear identity (athlete, sport, position, lifestyle) makes you more valuable.

4 BEFORE REACHING OUT TO BRANDS

Most athletes start NIL conversations with zero preparation. Don't be that athlete.

- ☒ **Compliance**
Know your school NIL rules + compliance contact. Save it in your phone.
- ☒ **Reporting**
Basic understanding of NIL reporting, including **NIL Go** if your school / level requires it.
- ☒ **Media kit**
Simple media kit (photo, sport, stats, social handles). You can create one for free on Canva.
- ☒ **Email**
Create a dedicated NIL email. It's free, and shows effort & professionalism.
- ☒ **What you offer**
Clear idea of what you can offer brands (posts, content, appearances).
- ☒ **Presence**
Clean, consistent social media presence.
- ☒ **Finances**
Separate bank account + plan for taxes
- ☒ **Pricing**
Basic idea of your pricing or value.

5 MISTAKES THAT COST ATHLETES THEIR ELIGIBILITY

- ☐ **Signing Before Checking School Rules**
Some NIL opportunities must be disclosed or reviewed. Always know your school's process before signing.
- ☐ **Not Reading the Entire Contract**
Athletes often focus on the payment and miss restrictions, exclusivity clauses, or long-term obligations hidden in the fine print.
- ☐ **Accepting Benefits Without Clear Terms**
Free products, cash, trips, or perks should always have a legitimate NIL purpose and documented terms.
- ☐ **Broad rights to your content or likeness**
A paycheck today isn't worth losing control of your name, image, likeness, or content tomorrow. Always understand how long a company can use your NIL and where they can use it.
- ☐ **Assuming NIL Money Is Tax-Free**
NIL income is generally taxable. Track what you earn and plan accordingly.

Protect your eligibility. Protect your money. Protect your future.

READY TO GO DEEPER?

The NIL Rookie Playbook is just the start. For more, check out: **The NIL Brand Blueprint – \$27**

Build the profile brands actually pay attention to. Platform strategy, media kit, brand pitch, and how to land your first 3 deals.

→ **Get it at mpaktmgmt.com** Follow @adtheagent on Instagram and TikTok for free NIL strategy every week.