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The Transfer Portal has become increasingly popular following recent changes to NCAA rules. Student-athletes are no longer required to sit out their first year after transferring for the first time, which has made it increasingly compelling for student-athletes to enter the portal if they are unhappy at their school or not getting the desired amount of playing time. If you feel that the program you are playing in does not fit you as a student-athlete, it may make sense to begin exploring other programs to see if transferring is the right decision for you. How to Use the NCAA Transfer Portal: you feel the program you are playing in is not the right fit for you, it's important to take the following steps before contacting other schools. 1 - Do Your Homework! You must be 100% sure you're ready to transfer and know the transfer window for your sport.If you are currently receiving financial aid of any type, make sure you're aware of the terms. If you are on an athletic scholarship when you enter the Transfer Portal and do not get picked up by another school, your scholarship status could be at risk as early as the following term. Many scholarships do not transfer across schools, so make sure you're aware of the costs you may be on the hook for at a new school if you don't receive the same aid. Learn more about financial aid considerations in the section Most Common Transfer Scenarios below. Identify the upcoming transfer window for your sport. You can only enter the transfer portal during your sport's specified transfer window, which can be found in the When Can I Enter the Transfer Portal section below. Make sure your SportsRecruits profile is up-to-date with recent video. When a college coach finds an athlete in the Transfer Portal and wants to learn more, they'll search for more information about you. Make sure your online profile is in check!2 - Provide Notice of Transfer/Before initiating communications with other programs, you must inform your current coach of your intent to transfer and secure a permission-to-contact letter from your athletic department or compliance office. Make sure you plan ahead and begin this process early. Once these steps are approved, you can begin contacting other programs. 3 - Enter the Transfer Portal or Complete the Self-Release Form Once this waiver is approved, you must register with the NCAA Transfer Portal (for transfers outside of your current division) or fill out the NCAA Division III Release form (for transfers within Division III). Other Things to Consider Before Entering the Transfer Portal, you must be 100% sure you'd like to transfer. It's important to consider the following: Athletes must receive notice that they successfully made it into the Transfer Portal before initiating transfer discussions with other schools. Entering the Transfer Portal does not guarantee transfer eligibility. Athletes must be in good academic standing without a history of serious disciplinary action. Entering the Transfer Portal may impact your current scholarship as early as the next term, even if you do not end up transferring out. Scholarships do not always transfer across schools. Before accepting a transfer offer, make sure you speak to the coaches of the program you want to transfer to and determine whether transferring is financially feasible for your family. Continuing Athletics After Junior College Student-athletes looking to transfer from a 2-year college to a 4-year program do not need to enter the transfer portal. If you decide to transfer and are on an athletic scholarship, your school cannot immediately revoke your scholarship. However, it's important to know that your coach can take away your athletic scholarship the following semester. This could happen if there was another athlete on the team in need of the aid. It will be important to have an open line of communication with your coach throughout this process. Entering the transfer portal does not automatically mean you will be picked up by another school that semester. If you cannot transfer in the same semester you enter the portal, you need to be ready to cover the cost of tuition without your athletic scholarship, should it be reassigned to another teammate. When Can I Enter the Transfer Portal? The specific time of year you can enter the NCAA Transfer Portal depends on the sport you play. You can find the current transfer windows for the 2024-2025 recruiting calendar broken down by season and sport here. The current NCAA Notification of Transfer Windows are as follows: Fall Sports - In all fall sports besides football, student-athletes must provide written notification of transfer during a 30-day window, which begins 7 days after the championship selections for their respective sport. There is also a period from May 1st to May 15th that fall sport student-athletes can use during the Spring Semester. Football is the one exception for fall sports, as there is a 20-day period that begins the Monday after the first Saturday in December and ten days during the Spring Semester from April 16 to April 25th. Winter Sports - In all winter sports besides men's and women's basketball, a student-athlete must provide written notification of transfer during a 45-day window beginning 7 days after championship selections are made for their respective sport. some text in basketball, a student-athlete must provide written notification of transfer during a 30-day period that begins the day after the second round is completed in the Men's and Women's NCAA DI Basketball Championship. Spring Sports - Spring sport student-athletes must provide written notification of transfer from December 1st to December 15th or during the 30-day window that begins 7 days after the championship selections for their respective sport. After a student-athlete enters the Transfer Portal, college coaches may search for more information about them and contact that athlete with interest in adding them to their program. Make sure your SportsRecruits profile is up-to-date with recent videos showcasing your skills, as college coaches use SportsRecruits to discover potential transfers to add to their team. Remember, it is not advantageous to sit back and wait. If you have a school in mind, take the time to reach out to them and introduce yourself. Redshirting Redshirting is when you are a part of a team and do not use a year of eligibility. You can typically still practice with your team and be involved in other team activities, but you cannot compete for your team competitively. A student-athlete may fit into two distinct redshirt categories: medical and academic. A medical redshirt is when you lose a year of competition due to injury but can get that year of eligibility back. The NCAA Rule is that the injury must have occurred in the first half of the season and that the athlete competed in 30% or less of the team's games. An academic redshirt is when a student-athlete does not have the minimum 2.3 GPA to compete athletically. Remember that a student-athlete must have above a 2.0 GPA to qualify for and receive an athletic scholarship. In 2021, the NCAA released a rule that student-athletes no longer need to redshirt in their first year after transferring. There are specific qualifications a student-athlete needs to meet to play immediately after transferring to a new college. You can find those qualifications here. Conversely, if a student-athlete has transferred multiple times, they must redshirt the first year at their new program. Each student-athlete receives four years of athletic eligibility to play their sport in college. You can use your eligibility for NCAA Division I programs in 5 years. This 5-year span starts when you become a full-time student. For NCAA Division II and Division III Schools, your eligibility also begins when you are a full-time student but it can be paused at any time when you are not officially a full-time student. Most Common Transfer Scenarios The transfer process will look a bit different depending on the type of transfer. A few of the most common scenarios are outlined below. Transferring Between NCAA DI Programs Student-athletes who wish to transfer from one DI program to another should first complete the Transfer Module and notify their school in writing that they intend to enter the NCAA Transfer Portal. This written notice formally kicks off the transfer process and ensures compliance with NCAA Regulations. In return, the school will provide written confirmation if you are eligible to enter the portal. Once you obtain this written notice from your school's designated administrator, you can access the NCAA Transfer Portal. Note that athletes cannot access the portal until they've received this notice. Make sure your SportsRecruits profile is up-to-date and you have a recent video published before entering the Transfer Portal. Once you are on the portal, coaches may head to your profile to learn more and will not be able to evaluate you effectively without up-to-date information. Remember to hold off on initiating conversations with other schools until you've received written notice confirming you're in the Transfer Portal. If you begin contacting other programs before this, you run the risk of violating NCAA regulations and rules, which could hurt your chances of transferring. Once you have received this notice, coaches from other schools may reach out to express interest and discuss potential transfer opportunities. Transferring to Another NCAA DI Program If you currently play at an NCAA Division III program and wish to transfer to another DI, the only requirement is to fill out the NCAA Division III Self-Release form. You will want to work with your current school's athletic department and the prospective school you wish to transfer to in order to ensure you're following all the required administrative procedures. Transferring from NCAA DI to DI or DI to DI Division III athletes intending to transfer to DI or DI typically kick off the transfer process by providing written notice to their coach and/or athletic department of their intent to transfer and receiving written permission to contact. From there, they'll need to obtain an NCAA Eligibility Number, regardless of the division to which they are transferring. From here, DI athletes must enter the NCAA Transfer Portal if they wish to transfer to a DI program. Athletes wishing to transfer from DI to DI do not need to enter the Transfer Portal. Financial Aid Considerations Before transferring to another school, it's important to know that academic scholarships or need-based aid typically provided to DI athletes may not transfer. However, unlike DI, both DI and DI programs can offer athletic scholarships. Athletes should speak to the coaches and financial aids offices at schools they're considering to understand what type of aid package they can expect. Review the transfer procedures for the NCAA Division I and NCAA Division II to ensure you are taking the right steps to be successful in your transfer process. Transferring from NAIA to NCAA If you plan to transfer from an NAIA school to an NCAA DI or DI school, you won't have to enter the NCAA Transfer Portal. Note that athletes cannot access the portal until they've received this notice. Make sure your SportsRecruits profile is up-to-date and you have a recent video published before entering the Transfer Portal. However, you will need to obtain your NCAA Eligibility Number if you're transferring to a DI or DI. Without it, NCAA coaches cannot contact you. To get this number, you must have completed your NCAA-approved core courses and have the required GPA. To register for your NCAA Eligibility Number, go to the NCAA Eligibility Center. If you plan to transfer from an NAIA school to an NCAA DI program, it's important to know each program has specific requirements. Reach out to the DI schools you're interested in to make sure you are eligible. Transferring from a 2-Year College to NCAA If you are looking to transfer to an NCAA DI or DI program from a Junior College, you will not need to enter the NCAA Transfer portal, however, you must still obtain your NCAA Eligibility Number. To get this number, you must have completed the NCAA-approved core course load. To register for your NCAA Eligibility Number, go to the NCAA Eligibility Center. NCAA Division III programs have specific eligibility requirements that vary by school. We recommend contacting a representative at the school to determine your eligibility. Other Transfer Requirements & Rules How Many Times Can You Transfer Colleges? Student-athletes are allowed to transfer as many times as they wish. That being said, you could be required to serve a penalty if you have transferred a second time to a four-year university, you may need to redshirt your first year at that program. Also, remember that you only have 4 years of eligibility, meaning you are only allowed to compete in collegiate games over four years. GPA Requirements to Transfer Most colleges require at least a 2.0 GPA to be eligible to transfer. However, the better your grades are, the more appealing you are to prospective programs. NCAA Transfer Rules for Graduate-Students Following the revisions to transfer rules in 2022, student-athletes were mandated to enter the Transfer Portal within sport-specific windows. Post-graduate students were considered exempt from following those windows. Graduate students must abide by the May 1st deadline for Fall and Winter sports, and July 1st for Spring sports. Other requirements for graduate students include having one year of eligibility from your 5-year span, and you must graduate from that specific school. Michigan up, Ohio State down in college football rankings USA TODAY's Paul Myerberg breaks down this week's US LBM Coaches Poll and the future of Ryan Day Ohio State. As the season winds down, hundreds of college football players will soon be traveling to bowl games in various parts of the country. And hundreds of others will be off to a different destination: the transfer portal. Created by the NCAA in 2018, the transfer portal has quickly become a key pillar of college sports - a resource for athletes, a program-building tool for coaches and a never-ending source of intrigue for fans. But some of the mechanics of the portal remain misunderstood. With this year's college transfer market beginning to heat up, here's a look at how the portal works, how it's evolved in recent years and how it can benefit both athletes and coaches alike. A 2019 article on the NCAA's website describes the transfer portal as a "compliance tool to systematically manage the transfer process from start to finish." Put more simply: It's a database. The NCAA made this database in an attempt to simplify the first step in the transfer process. In the pre-portal days, athletes would have to ask their coach for permission to contact other schools, then find ways to get the word out that they were available. Coaches, meanwhile, would have to use their connections and word-of-mouth referrals to identify transferring athletes. Now, it's all just there in one spot. The portal is not a shortcut for the rest of the recruiting process. Coaches still have to recruit. Athletes still have to ensure they're eligible to compete at a new school. The portal is simply a way to help the two sides connect more easily, and earlier. Because the transfer portal is really just an online database, entering it just means that an athlete's name is uploaded to the database. When an athlete decides they want to explore transferring to another school, they have to notify their current school's compliance office. And the compliance office then has two business days to put that athlete's name in the portal. It's important to understand that the NCAA transfer portal is merely a tool used by coaches and players to find new schools. What really changed the landscape of college sports, and allowed a sort of free agency frenzy, was the NCAA's rule change on immediate eligibility. It used to be that if athletes wanted to transfer, they had to sit out a year before suiting up for their new school. But in spring 2021, the NCAA voted to allow athletes to transfer once and become immediately eligible. (Athletes are allowed to transfer a second time without penalty if they've completed their undergraduate degrees and are enrolling in a graduate program.) Since that rule change, hundreds of athletes have entered the portal each offseason, though not all find what they're looking for in their decision to switch schools. While football and basketball might get the most media talk (and fan interest), yes, the transfer portal database includes athletes for all sports. In the Football Bowl Subdivision, a 30-day window to enter the transfer portal runs from Dec. 4-Jan. 2. There is also a spring window from April 15-30. It's worth noting that these windows restrict when an athlete's name can be entered into the portal, not when they actually transfer to a different school. Absolutely, though it's somewhat rare in high-level college football. According to NCAA data, only 5% of FBS athletes who entered the transfer portal in 2020 or 2021 later withdrew and are assumed to be back at their original school. DJ Ungaletti talks at a newcomer availability DJ Ungaletti talks at a newcomer availability The introduction of the transfer portal allowed college football players to seek better opportunities elsewhere, similar to coaches. However, the entire landscape changed in 2021, as athletes were allowed to begin earning money through their Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL). What does that mean for schools and athletes maneuvering in the portal? Dive into PFSM's FREE Mock Draft Simulator and run a mock by yourself or with your friends! What Is College Football's Transfer Portal? The transfer portal is an online database that includes student-athletes' names in every sport at the Division I, II, and III levels. Players enter the portal through their school's compliance office, allowing them to explore their options and move to a different school without losing their eligibility or scholarship. Additionally, coaches are able to recruit players from the portal without violating the NCAA's rules and regulations. The governing body launched the transfer portal in 2018 to streamline the transfer process and offer transparency for players and schools. Prior to its inception, players had to receive permission from their program to contact outside schools and coaches. Oftentimes, their current coaches restricted where they could go. For example, during Urban Meyer's time at Florida, he didn't allow players to transfer in-state or in-conference, forcing them to seek opportunities in unfamiliar places. The portal's inception was a boon for the sport, as player movement generates buzz for fanbases and adds a new element to roster management. But it hasn't come without its faults. How Does the Transfer Portal Work? Currently, there are two transfer portal windows: winter (from early December to early January) and spring (a 15-day period that begins and ends in April). Athletes must enter the portal during either of the two windows, be academically eligible, and meet progress-toward-degree requirements to be eligible to play at their new school. However, graduate transfers (athletes continuing to play after earning their bachelor's degree) are able to enter the portal at any time. Players in the portal can choose their next school at any point after entering, as they are not beholden to either window's closing. KEEP READING: What Is NIL? Additionally, they can remove their names at any time as long as they have not signed a financial aid agreement elsewhere. There is no restriction on the number of portal entries by a single player, and in April 2024, new legislation was passed giving athletes unlimited transfers. Of course, players cannot transfer midway or play for a second program in the same season. Before the new rule change, the NCAA offered a one-time free transfer, allowing athletes to play immediately at their new school. But they would need to sit out a season - or apply for a waiver - if they transferred again in the future. Notable College Football Transfers in the Portal Era Player movement in the transfer portal era has impacted the sport in momentous ways and offered players the opportunity to showcase their talents rather than suffocate on the bench. There may be no better cases than these: Jo Burrow: Following a QB battle against Dwayne Haskins at Ohio State, Burrow transferred to LSU in 2018, led the Tigers to a national championship, won the Heisman Trophy, and broke several NCAA, SEC, and team records. Justin Fields: Tired of backing up Jake Fromm at Georgia, Fields took his talents to Ohio State in 2019. He powered the Buckeyes to two consecutive College Football Playoff appearances and finished third in the Heisman voting in 2019 and 2020. Caleb Williams: After shining as a true freshman under Lincoln Riley at Oklahoma, Williams followed the head coach to USC in 2022. Channeling his inner Patrick Mahomes, he threw 42 touchdowns and only five picks en route to the Heisman Trophy in his first year in LA. Jalen Hurts: Hurts' time at Alabama is well-documented, as he lost the QB job to Tua Tagovailoa during the 2017 National Championship, as the latter led the Crimson Tide to a comeback victory over Georgia. Hurts spent a season backing him up but then joined QB guru Lincoln Riley in Norman, and as they say, the rest is history. Jayden Daniels: Daniels made his name as a scrambling dual-threat at Arizona State but left for LSU to "showcase my talent on a national stage." He did just that over two years in Baton Rouge, leading the Tigers to back-to-back 10-win campaigns to begin the Brian Kelly era and winning the Heisman in 2023. College Football Network has you covered with the latest news and analysis, rankings, transfer portal information, top 10 returning players, the 2024 college football season schedule, and much more! The college football chaos has arrived. The transfer portal is officially open for college football, and there has been no shortage of prominent names featured. From Heisman finalists to five-star recruits, student athletes are taking full advantage of the option to transfer to other schools. The portal offers a way for athletes to have a say in where they conclude their college careers. Most often, those who enter the portal are either graduate transfers with another year of eligibility, players at programs that fired or lost the head coaches who recruited them, or promising up-and-comers stuck behind on a depth chart, looking to get more reps on the field. Whether coaches agree with it or not, the transfer portal has become one of the best ways to bolster programs. This season alone, teams like Washington, USC, Oregon, Texas and Florida State all heavily benefited from procuring players from the portal last year. While a national champion has yet to be crowned for this season, many colleges have already begun the process of building their teams for the 2024 campaign, and it starts with addressing options in the transfer portal. MORE: Tracking all the quarterbacks to enter the transfer portal Here are the rules and regulations fans need to know about the NCAA transfer portal. What is the transfer portal? The transfer portal began in 2018 as a way for athletes to move between programs. If a student athlete wishes to leave their current school to go elsewhere, they must inform their program of their decision to enter the transfer portal. From there, the school has two business days to enter the athlete's name into the database for the portal. Once in the portal, a player can begin the process of selecting a new destination, as interested coaches and staff members have the ability to reach out and start the recruiting process. Just because a player enters the transfer portal does not mean they cannot return to their original school. Athletes can join the portal, and then decide later to remove themselves if the interest is not there from other schools, or if the student changes their mind about leaving. When does the transfer portal open? The transfer portal in the fall begins with the sport's championship selection. For football, that means the portal opens on Dec. 4, 2023, the day after the College Football Playoff bracket was revealed and bowl games were announced. How long is the transfer portal open? The transfer portal is open for a total of 30 days in the winter. Players have until Jan. 2, 2024, to enter their name in the portal, however, they do not have to commit to a new program before the deadline is over. There will also be a 15-day period in the spring for players to enter the portal. That will be from May 1 to May 15. MORE: Bowl projections | Championship games picks With that said, not every player in the portal is restricted to that time frame. Graduate transfers - players who graduated from a four-year school and still have a fifth year of eligibility - can enter into the portal at any time. NCAA transfer portal rules As expected, there are restrictions in place for the transfer portal. In addition to the time constraints, the NCAA has other rules when it comes to athletes transferring schools. As of April 2021, athletes are no longer required to sit out a year after transferring to a new school. Before COVID-19, players would have to not play for a season, taking a redshirt year where they would still practice with the team and remain on scholarship. However, due to the shortened/canceled seasons during the pandemic, the NCAA altered its rules when it came to the transfer portal. Players still must be academically eligible to compete. If they do not meet the academic requirements to immediately play at a new school, they will have to sit out, just as any other ineligible student athlete must. When it comes to graduate transfers, as mentioned, they are eligible to enter the portal at any time. However, there are still rules for the older players as well. In order for a grad transfer to switch schools, they must have graduated from their current college, have at least one year of eligibility left on their five-year clock and are enrolling in a graduate school that has their desired sport. The full list of rules and requirements by the NCAA can be found here. What College Football Playoff fans think of the bracket (probably) After the release of the CFP 12-team bracket, Before The Snap shares a sketch comedy take on the latest rankings from the fans' perspective. As college football nears the end of its season, more players might decide to enter the transfer portal. Since its 2018 debut, the NCAA transfer portal has significantly impacted collegiate sports. The number of student-athletes seeking to move colleges with the hopes of finding a better path to the pros has exploded. With the transfer portal opening its winter window Dec. 9, here's everything you need to know about it. The NCAA launched the transfer portal on Oct. 15, 2018. Since its inception, thousands of college athletes across the country have entered the portal every year. The transfer portal is an online database meant to streamline the first step of an athlete's transfer process. It was created as a tool that systematically manages the transfer process from start to finish, adding more transparency to the process between schools and student-athletes. The NCAA's transfer portal is a database where players who are interested in switching schools can enter their names so coaches and schools can contact them. Once a player decides to enter the transfer portal and notifies the university, the school has 48 hours to report this information to an online database that lists athletes wishing to continue their careers elsewhere. Coaches from other programs can view the updates in real-time as the database is continuously refreshed with new information, allowing them to begin recruiting these players right away. College football players have two windows in which they can enter the transfer portal: winter and spring. The winter portal opened Monday, Dec. 9, and ends on Saturday, Dec. 28. Meanwhile, the spring window runs from Wednesday, April 16, 2025, to Friday, April 25, 2025. These windows restrict when athletes can enter their names into the portal, not when they can transfer schools. Each college sport has a designated period for when their transfer portal window opens. The current window closes Saturday, Dec. 28. Yes, college athletes can essentially transfer as many times as they want as long as they're eligible. In 2021, the NCAA instituted a rule that said all underclassmen were allowed to transfer one time with immediate eligibility but would have to sit out a year if they transferred a second time as an undergraduate. That rule was officially changed this spring. Now, all college athletes who transfer schools will have immediate eligibility to play the next season at their school. However, they cannot play for multiple teams in one season. Additionally, a student-athlete must leave their school with academic eligibility, cannot be subject to discipline, suspension or dismissal and must meet all progress-toward-degree requirements at their new school prior to competing. Transfer portal is an invaluable concept for college sports. But what does this sometimes controversial idea actually constitute? The NCAA coaches images of a supernatural force - so much so, a soda brand has depicted "transfer portal" like a Stranger Things plot device in an ad campaign that runs throughout the college football season. Be the actual transfer portal isn't nearly so foreign, even if it seems complicated. The actual portal is simply the online database athletes use to open their possibilities. How the process actually works entails quite a bit more. Here is a primer on how the NCAA transfer portal works for college football. One-Time Transfer Per the NCAA's Eligibility Center, one-time transfers must adhere to the following criteria: They must be transferring from a four-year college or university to a Div. I member school. They must be academically eligible upon the time of transfer. This must be their first college transfer - ergo the "one-time" exception. The one-time transfer exception became something of a hot-button issue due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however. In the spring of 2021, the NCAA waived the longtime rule requiring transfers to sit out for a year at their new school. Though it began in the 2018-19 academic calendar year, the rise of the term "transfer portal" tracks commensurate with this shift to allow most transfers immediate eligibility. Individual conferences that previously enforced transfer rules that were more stringent than the NCAA's adjusted along with the governing body's overall changes. To wit, in 2021, the Southeastern Conference moved away from an old rule requiring any in-league transfer to redshirt. Multiple-Time Transfer The rule requiring a transfer athlete to sit out for a redshirt season with his new program still applies to those who transfer more than once - with a notable exception, and one not tied specifically to this "portal" era. Athletes that finished their undergraduate studies are immediately eligible when transferring. Oftentimes, a graduate will change programs to attend a university that offers graduate programs their undergraduate school might not. However, a transfer needs to have at least one year of playing eligibility remaining. So, what exactly is the portal? How does it work, and when does it open? 24/7Sports has the answers to all those questions and many more below. What is the transfer portal? The transfer portal is an NCAA database in which players who have opted to transfer are listed. Those with access to the portal include coaches, athletic administrators and compliance officials. The database can be sorted by year, division and sport, including football subcategories like FBS, FCS or just general football. Players inform their compliance department when they'd like to enter the transfer portal. Typically, a player's name is listed in the database within 48 hours of the request. Players are not required to tell their coaching staffs of their intention to enter the portal. Once a player is officially listed in the portal, schools are free to contact them without restriction. Communicating with a player before they enter the portal is a violation and is considered tampering. Players never technically exit the transfer portal once they submit their name. If a player signs with a new school, they're listed as "mismatched" in the portal. If a player chooses to return to their previous school, they're listed as "withdrawn." Are players forced to leave after entering the portal? No. There are notable examples every cycle of a player entering the portal and ultimately choosing to return to their original school. It happened earlier this year when Liberty QB Kaidon Salter, the C-USA Offensive Player of the Year, withdrew from the portal just three days after officially entering. If a player is good enough, schools are usually willing to let them explore their options and come back. It doesn't work that way for everyone, however. Many players enter the transfer portal and don't garner the interest they expect. But once a player enters the portal, there's no requirement for their school to keep them on the roster past the current semester. Thus, you end up with many players stuck in transfer portal purgatory, a phenomenon 247Sports explored in 2021. That cycle there were 826 FBS scholarship players in the 247Sports portal database. Only 37.8% of them stayed on the FBS level for the following season. Which rule changes have impacted the transfer portal? The transfer portal began as more of a curiosity than a game-changer back in October 2018. At that point, the NCAA rules landscape was still highly restrictive for transfers. Conferences had rules limiting players from transferring within their leagues. Underclassmen couldn't transfer without sitting out a year in residence penalty - an NCAA rule that dictates a non-graduate transfer wasn't eligible to play in their first season following a transfer. Name, image and likeness also had yet to be introduced. But the rules have changed rapidly over the years. Here are some rules that represent the biggest shifts in the transfer portal. April 28, 2021: All NCAA players given one-time transfer exemption This is the rule change that altered everything. Whereas once the only players who could transfer freely were grad transfers, in April 2021 the NCAA voted to allow athletes in all sports to transfer once without sitting out a year of eligibility. This immediately led to a huge spike in the number of football transfers. There were 1,692 FBS players who entered the portal in the 2019-20 cycle. That number nearly doubled two years later to 3,083 during the 2021-22 cycle. This past cycle, that number jumped to 3,252 and the 2023-24 cycle is again on pace to set a record. June 4, 2021: SEC eliminates intraconference transfer rule The SEC was the last conference to eliminate its intraconference transfer restrictions in June 2021, paving the way for any transfer to stay within the league if they so choose. For a long time, even for graduate transfers, there were intraconference transfer restrictions. Coaches could even restrict a player from transferring to a school on their future schedule. Perhaps the most infamous example of this came in 2017 when Kansas State receiver Corey Sutton requested a transfer release from the program, providing the Wildcats a list of 35 schools he'd like to transfer to. Kansas State blocked him from transferring to all 35. That's the landscape that transfers previously had to navigate just eight years ago. The tide has turned considerably in a short amount of time. Note: The SEC still does have somewhat of an intraconference transfer restriction. Any SEC player hoping to transfer within the league must do so by the end of the winter transfer portal window. Aug. 31, 2022: NCAA introduces transfer windows The transfer portal's initial iterations never closed. Players were free to enter the portal at any time. That shifted in 2022 when the NCAA introduced transfer windows for each sport. At the start, fall sports had a 45-day winter window and a 15-day spring window. That's since shifted to a 30-day fall window. Dec. 22, 2023: Multi-time transfers cleared to play in 2024 Changes to the transfer system aren't just coming from the NCAA, they're coming from the courts. The NCAA is locked up in multiple legal battles, one of which is occurring in West Virginia where a judge granted a temporary restraining order against the NCAA from enforcing its rules about second-time undergraduate transfers, who were required to sit a year in residence. With the judge issuing that ruling, the NCAA later sent out a memo that all transfers during the 2023-24 academic calendar year are eligible to play immediately, even if they've already transferred once as an undergraduate. Thus, we enter a spring transfer window where every player, whether they're transferred before or not, will be eligible for the 2024 season. When can players enter the transfer portal? There are two transfer windows for football players, in the winter and in the spring. The winter window ran from Dec. 4 to Jan. 2. The spring window will open April 16 and close April 30. The design here is one window follows the regular season and one window follows spring practice. There are other circumstances that allow a player to enter the portal outside that window. Graduate transfers can enter the portal whenever they'd like without restriction. The NCAA also grants a 30-day immediate portal window for players whose head coach leaves the program. So if a head coach steps down in June, a transfer window immediately triggers. The winter transfer window is also a bit fluid. The deadline is Jan. 2 but athletes who participate in a bowl game or a postseason game are given a five-day buffer from when the regular season ends. When the transfer portal window opens varies by sport. For men's and women's basketball, it will open March 18, the day of Selection Sunday and the last day for all conference tournaments, and close on May 1. The baseball window opens June 3 and runs through July 2. What impact have transfers had on college football? Transfers are annually some of the best players in the sport. Five of the past seven Heisman Trophy winners were transfers. Among the first and second-team all-conference selections in the FBS this year, 28.5% of them were transferred at least once in their careers. The 2023 NFL Draft saw a record-setting group of former transfers drafted, too, with 52 such players, including five first-rounders, being selected last year. There were 37 former transfers drafted in 2022. The college football transfer portal was officially put into place prior to the start of the 2019 college football season. It allows college football players to change schools and play for a different program while they still have remaining eligibility to play in games. Transferred players used to be required to sit out for an entire year before being allowed to play again, but the rules have recently changed. The NCAA tweaked the rules during the 2021 college football offseason, no longer requiring players to sit out for a season. They will be immediately eligible to play for their new program, opening the door for many more players to enter the transfer portal. The total number of players transferring between college football has reportedly doubled since the new rule took effect. * Unlock Free tips from our Experts Get Picks Now The new rules and guidelines have basically created a traditional free-agency type format for college football players. They now have much more freedom to change teams and no longer face any restrictions for doing so. Here is everything you need to know about the college football transfer portal. When does the 2023 transfer portal open? The 2023 transfer portal opens on Monday, Dec. 4. The window will remain open for 30 days, until the first two days of the New Year. This will be the second transfer portal window of the year, preceded by a 15-day period in April. More than 2,000 players entered the transfer window last December, and around the same number will be expected this year. What are the latest rule changes to the transfer portal? As of 2023, the NCAA added a legislation to limit waivers for second-time transfer players. This means any time a player transfers twice, they must meet a specific set of criteria to be able to play during the same season. Failure to meet the criteria put the player at risk of missing the season. What is NCAA transfer portal? NCAA CFP National Championship field logo The transfer portal gives college football players an opportunity to switch programs during the offseason. This most commonly occurs when a player is unhappy with their role within a team scheme or is seeking a situation where they will receive more playing time. It can most simply be explained as college football's version of free agency. College Transfer Portal Rules: How It Works The NCAA has removed the requirement for players to take a year off from playing football before becoming eligible to play for their new team. This means that players switching teams in the offseason will be immediately available to play for their new sides during the upcoming season. Players essentially enter their names into the transfer portal online database. This allows for every college football program in the country to see a list of players with intentions of changing teams. They can now legally recruit these players to their school, similar to the way they do with high school players entering college for the first time. Players are required to enter the transfer portal, else, they will be ineligible to change teams. Entering the portal doesn't require a player to transfer as they are allowed to remove themselves at any time and remain with their current program. NCAA Transfer Portal Windows Players may officially enter their names into the portal the day after the teams are announced for the College Football Playoffs. The window will remain open for 45 days. There is a second window of 15 days that opens on 1st May. Any player with the intention of transferring must add their name to the official list during one of these two windows or they will be ineligible to transfer. There are a few exceptions to the window rules. Graduate transfers may enter the portal at any time and don't need to wait for one of the windows to open. College football teams that fire their head coaches will also immediately open a 30-day window for all of their players to immediately enter the portal. What do coaches see in the transfer portal? College head coaches simply see a list of names, including players with the intention of transferring to a new school. These players are allowed to seek out new opportunities, while coaches and universities may recruit whichever players they are interested in acquiring. Pros and Cons of Transfer Portal for student-athletes One of the biggest advantages of allowing student-athletes to transfer from one program to another is that they get the best chance of playing during their football careers. Some players are buried on the depth chart of the initial school they chose. They can now move to a team that will give them more chances of getting into a game and demonstrate their talents for a potential professional football career later on. One of the biggest disadvantages has to do with scholarships. Universities may be less motivated to hand out large scholarships to promising high school football players because of their potential to transfer out of each college in any given year. They may choose to allocate their resources elsewhere rather than for scholarships. This may limit certain student-athlete options when initially choosing a college to attend. About the author Quick Links More from Sportskeeda Edited by Akshay Saraswat