



NCAA DIVISION I WOMEN'S BASKETBALL SELECTION CRITERIA & NCAA EVALUATION TOOL (NET)

Frequently Asked Questions

SELECTION CRITERIA

Selection in 2025-26 will continue to be based upon an extensive array of factors. The committee team selection criteria/priorities include the following, listed alphabetically, as it is up to each committee member to decide priority order:

- Bad losses
- Common opponents
- Competitive in losses
- Early performance versus late performance
- Head-to-head
- NET ranking
- Observable component
- Overall record
- Regional rankings
- Significant wins
- Strength of schedule
- Wins Above Bubble (WAB) ranking

During selection weekend, the committee members independently evaluate a vast pool of information. It is these subjective opinions, developed after watching hundreds of games, investing many hours of personal team (or game) observations, review and comparison of objective data, plus discussions with coaches and campus/conference representatives, that dictate how each committee member ultimately votes on the selection of the 37 at-large teams, followed by the seeding and bracketing of the 68-team championship bracket each year.

How are teams selected and seeded by the committee for the championship?

Selection to the tournament is based on the season of work to that date, while seeding is based on how that team is playing now.

Where should one go for more information on the selection, seeding and bracketing process as well as NET?

A variety of Division I Women's Basketball Championship and NET resources are available at <https://www.ncaa.org/sports/2015/9/21/division-i-women-s-basketball.aspx>.

NCAA EVALUATION TOOL (NET)

The 2025-26 season marks the sixth year that the NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Committee has utilized the NCAA Evaluation Tool (NET) to assess and rank teams. The committee decided to move from the RPI to the NET after a lengthy evaluation process that included a comprehensive assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the men's basketball NET that had been used by the Division I Men's Basketball Committee as a sorting tool since the 2018-19 season. Following an analysis of women's basketball statistical data over a 10-year period by external consultants, the women's committee concluded that NET was an optimal sorting tool and should be in place beginning with the 2020-21 season.

What is included in the NET ranking?

The NET for women's basketball is the contemporary sorting tool used to measure a team's quality and help evaluate team resumes for selection and seeding in the NCAA tournament. NET ranking is determined by who you played, where you played, how efficiently you played and the result of the game. The women's basketball NET includes **Adjusted Net Efficiency** and **Team Value Index**. The NET rankings **DO NOT** include any preseason data or games played against non-Division I opponents.

What is Adjusted Net Efficiency?

Adjusted Net Efficiency is a measure of a team's overall performance during the regular season, determined by the difference between offensive efficiency (points per possession) and defensive efficiency (opponents points per possession). It also accounts for strength of opponents (as measured by their adjusted net efficiency) and location (home/away/neutral) of the games (against Division I opponents only).

What is Team Value Index?

Team Value Index is the results-oriented component of the NET, ranking more highly those teams that played and beat other good teams, factoring in opponent, location of the game and winner.

What does location of the game mean to a team's NET ranking?

In both Adjusted Net Efficiency and Team Value Index, the same performance against the same opponent will be valued more on the road than at a neutral site, and more at a neutral site than at home. The amount of this location adjustment is based on the data itself, as teams tend to generally perform worse on the road than neutral than at home, so adjusting for that allows for fairer comparisons than just using raw values.

Can a team improve its NET ranking by running up the score differential in a game?

The efficiency component of NET is based on net points per possession, which you can think of maximizing in this way:

- Every time down the court on offense, you want to score...the more points the better.

- Every time down the court on defense, you want to stop the opponent from scoring...the fewer points the better

The efficiency component of NET is measuring how well the team is achieving those fundamental goals of basketball, with further adjustments for the opponent and site of each game. Teams employing something unnatural/different from fundamental basketball to "run up the score," the impact of that possibility is mitigated by calculating things on a per-possession basis throughout the entire course of a season. Scheduling "down" to increase efficiencies will be noted by the committee during the selection process.

When and where are the NET rankings provided?

- The first public NET rankings in 2025-26 will be posted on December 1, 2025 and updated daily throughout the season, with final NET rankings posted at the conclusion of the NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Championship in early April.
- The NET is most optimal with a full season worth of data included. It is released early because of the demand and interest from membership, media and fans.
- NET rankings are available here:
<https://www.ncaa.com/rankings/basketball-women/d1/ncaa-womens-basketball-net-rankings>

NET ALGORITHM

The NET ranking is derived from a more complex algorithm rather than a simple formula with relatively straightforward components. Adjusted Net Efficiency and Team Value Index are calculated using machine learning models implemented over many lines of code, with the calculations adjusting with new results each day in such a way that there is no static "formula" for them.

How are the women's and men's basketball NET different?

While the systems share high-level goals and individual components, the NET algorithm used in each is different. The machine learning model developed for each sport utilizes only that sport's data. The women's model uses only women's game data, while the men's model only uses men's game data. The weights for each are trained using the historical data from the respective sports.

Does the committee ever adjust the NET algorithm?

As they have historically done, the Division I Women's Basketball Committee each summer before the season starts, conducts an annual assessment of the women's basketball NET and determines if the NET needs to be adjusted based on new data points in the game.

WINS ABOVE BUBBLE (WAB)

Wins Above Bubble (WAB) is the newest selection criteria for the Division I Women's Basketball Committee and will be used for the first time in 2025-26.

What is WAB?

WAB is a results-based metric that measures the quality of a team's resume. It shows how many wins a team has compared to what a bubble team would average against the same schedule. Each game has an individual value and does not factor in margin of victory or efficiency, only results.

What does location of the game mean to a team's WAB ranking?

Like the NET, the same results against the same opponent will be valued more on the road than at a neutral site, and more at a neutral site than at home.

How does the WAB ranking relate to the NET ranking?

NET and WAB are complementary metrics. The NET ranking is a predictive metric that focuses on how efficient a team is across the season. The WAB ranking is a results-based metric that measures a team's resume, comparing the team's results to what a bubble team would do against the same schedule. The NET feeds into the WAB by measuring how hard it is to defeat each opponent.

TEAM SHEETS

Team sheets provide a one-page snapshot of each team at that point in the season.

What's included on the respective team sheets?

Team sheets provide a sorting of a team's NET ranking that includes home/away/neutral results. The 2025-26 season will be the second season that the team sheets will utilize a quadrant organization system, and the first season that WAB will be included.

How were the quadrant ranges determined?

The home-away-neutral quadrant NET rank ranges are unique to women's basketball and were determined using home/away/neutral site game results from the last three women's basketball seasons before its inception (2021-24). A "validity check" was then made to data going back to 2010-11 to make a final determination on game distributions in each quadrant range. Results from 2024-25 were analyzed and aligned with the predicted ranges.

What are the quadrant ranges for the 2025-26 season?

The 2025-26 NET rank quadrant ranges are quadrant one (home 1-25, neutral 1-35 and away 1-45); quadrant two (home 26-55, neutral 36-65 and away 46-80); quadrant three (home 56-90, neutral 66-105 and away 81-130) and quadrant four (home 91-plus, neutral 106-plus and away 131-plus).

What is expected winning percentage and how did it factor into the projected quadrant ranges?

Expected winning percentage versus a given opponent rank (in NET) with respect to game location, across all games, helped to determine the final quadrant ranges. Expected winning percentage comes from regression models on past game results over the last three seasons, predicting a team's chance of winning based on their NET, the opponent's NET, and location of the game. Expected winning percentage for each game is calculated from a "top team" perspective to reflect how hard each game is to win for NCAA tournament-worthy teams. More precisely, it's the chance that a 90th percentile Division I team, or a team ranked approximately 36 in NET, would fair versus an opponent ranked X in NET, with the game played at a specific location (home, away or neutral).

Why are quadrant ranges different for men's and women's basketball?

After in-depth analysis, copying men's basketball quadrant ranges was not recommended for women's basketball. Based on historical statistical data, women's basketball has a greater disparity between the top teams and the rest of the teams and has shown a consistently lower home court advantage. The NET rank ranges for women's basketball quadrants are higher in quadrants 1-3 to differentiate harder from easier games more properly. Home-away-neutral ranges in each category overlap more in women's basketball since there isn't as much difference in winning by location as there is in men's basketball currently.

Does the NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Committee include outside metrics and/or rankings besides the NET and WAB rankings on the team sheets?

The committee does not currently include other outside metrics and/or rankings besides the NET and WAB rankings as part of the team sheets.

HISTORY – TRANSITION FROM RPI TO NET

The Ratings Percentage Index (RPI) was created in 1981 to provide supplemental data for the Division I Men's Basketball Committee in its evaluation of teams for at-large selection and seeding of the championship bracket. The Division I Women's Basketball Committee utilized RPI from 1984 until 2020 before going to NET.

RPI consisted of three factors weighted as follows:

1. Division I winning percentage -- 25 percent of the RPI
2. Opponents' winning percentage -- 50 percent of the RPI
3. Opponents' opponent winning percentage -- 25 percent of the RPI

Simply stated, the RPI provided a ranking of each institution based on their Division I winning percentage and strength of schedule, while the women's basketball NET is a contemporary sorting tool that more accurately measures the quality of a team by looking at who you played, where you played, how efficiently you played and the result of the game.