

2027 NCAA DIVISION I WOMEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP PRINCIPLES AND PROCEDURES FOR ESTABLISHING THE BRACKET

There are three phases in the process:

- I. **Select** the 44 at-large teams;
- II. **Seed** the field of 76 teams; and
- III. **Place** the teams into the championship bracket.

General Principles for Selection, Seeding and Bracketing

The basketball committee will abide by the following principles:

- A committee member ("member") shall not be present during discussions regarding the selection or seeding of a team the individual represents as an institutional or conference administrator.
- At no point in the process shall a member vote for a team the individual represents as an institutional or conference administrator.
- A member shall not answer questions about the team the individual represents, except for factual questions (e.g., dates of injuries, status of injured players). A conference administrator is permitted to answer general questions (i.e., relative strengths of teams within a conference) about teams in the conference the individual represents. An athletics administrator is permitted to discuss other teams in the individual's conference only when asked.
- All votes will be by secret ballot.
- Principles must be followed by the committee during selection, seeding and bracketing of the championship field. **Selection, seeding and bracketing principles are not considered in priority order.** All principles must be adhered to throughout each of the three processes. The committee will make every effort to apply "additional considerations", provided they do not cause a violation of the principles.

Among the resources available to the committee are complete box scores, game summaries and notes, various computer rankings, head-to-head results, chronological results, Division I results, non-conference results, home and away results, results in the last twelve games, rankings, polls, injured and available/unavailable reports and the coaches' regional advisory committee rankings.

The NCAA Division I Women's Basketball Principles and Procedures for Establishing the Bracket document is included in the comprehensive review of the Division I Women's Basketball Championship, conducted annually by the Division I Women's Basketball Committee. This document was approved by the Division I Women's Basketball Committee, July 2026 and will be in effect for the 2027 championship.

Selection Criteria

Criteria used by the Division I Women's Basketball Committee to evaluate a team includes (alphabetically):

- Bad losses
- Common opponents
- Competitive in losses
- Early performance versus late performance
- Head-to-head outcomes
- NET ranking
- Observable component
- Overall record
- Significant wins
- Strength of schedule
- Wins Above Bubble 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 conference representatives, that dictate how each committee member ultimately votes on the selection of the 44 at-large teams, seeding and bracketing of the teams that make up the 76 team championship bracket each year.

I. Selecting At-Large Teams

The committee shall select the 44 best teams to fill the at-large berths.

To be selected as an at-large team, a team must have an overall record of .500 or above.

There is no limit on the number of teams the committee may select from one conference.

Procedures for Selecting At-Large Teams

1. At the start of the selection meeting, each committee member will receive an "initial ballot" comprised of two columns listing all eligible Division I teams in alphabetical order.

Each committee member will submit the ballot by a designated time on the first full day of the selection meeting.

2. In the first column, each committee member shall identify not more than 28 teams that, in that member's opinion, should be at-large selections in the tournament based upon play to date, regardless of whether the team could eventually represent its conference as the automatic qualifier.
3. In the second column, each committee member shall identify all teams that should receive consideration for at-large berths. Each committee member must identify a minimum of 56 teams on the initial ballot between those under consideration and at-large. There is no maximum limit in the second column.
4. A member need not vote for a team that has earned automatic qualification at the time the initial ballot is submitted.
5. Any team receiving all but three of the eligible votes in Column 1 shall move into the tournament field as an at-large selection.
6. The committee will form an "at-large nomination board" consisting of an alphabetical listing of all teams that:

- a. Received more than four votes in either of the columns of the initial ballot but, did not receive enough votes to move onto the at-large board.
- b. Did not receive more than one vote on the initial ballot, but was subsequently recommended by more than one member prior to closing initial nominations.
- c. Won or shared the regular-season conference championship or conference divisional championship.

7. The process for creating the initial "at-large nomination board" will then be closed.
8. A team may be removed from the nomination board if it receives all but three of the eligible votes.
9. A team may be added to the at-large nomination board at any time provided it receives at least four eligible votes.
10. Verbal nominations are permitted.

Remaining Ballots

1. The committee will evaluate those teams on the at-large nomination board.
2. Each committee member will submit a list of the best eight teams from the nomination board, not in rank order, to be added to the at-large field.
3. The eight teams receiving the most votes comprise the next at-large ballot. When a committee member's vote does not count due to conflicts, but their conflicted institution(s) received all eligible votes and another institution resulted in all eligible votes greater than the conflicted vote, this action shall result in a tiebreaker vote.
4. Each committee member will "rank" the eight teams, using a cross country scoring system (e.g., first or best is valued at one point).
5. The four teams receiving the fewest points shall be moved into the tournament field as an at-large

selection. The other four teams will be held for the next ballot.

6. The “list” eight, “rank” eight, “move” four process will be repeated until all at-large berths have been filled.
7. If a team fails to move onto the at-large board for two consecutive at-large ballots, it shall be returned to the at-large nomination board.
8. A team may be removed from the at-large field and returned to the at-large nomination board if it receives all but three of the eligible votes.

Additional Considerations

- At any time during the process, the chair may suggest that the committee begin reviewing teams that should be eliminated from the at-large nomination board. A team may be removed from consideration if it receives all but two of the eligible votes.
- At any time, the chair may call for a review of teams on the holding board. A majority of eligible votes can remove a team from or add a team to the holding board. Teams that have been removed from the holding board will return to the At-Large Nomination board.
- The number of teams eligible to receive votes may be increased or decreased by the chair if circumstances warrant. Further, the chair has the option to revise the number of teams to be moved onto the at-large board from four to two.
- At any time, the chair may call for a cross-country vote of all remaining teams on the at-large nomination board.
- At any time during the process of selecting the at-large teams, the committee may elect to begin seeding the teams.

II. Seeding of Teams

The committee will create a seed list (i.e., rank of the teams 1 through 76) which is used as a reference to assess competitive balance across the four regions. Once the seed list is finalized, it remains unchanged while placing the teams into the championship bracket.

The bracket-placement principles may preclude a team from being placed in its “true” seed.

Procedures for Seeding Teams

1. Each committee member will submit a list of the best eight teams, not in rank order, from teams that are in the tournament as automatic qualifiers or at-large selections.
2. The eight teams receiving the most votes of the eligible votes comprise the next seed list ballot. When a committee member’s vote does not count due to conflicts, but their conflicted institution(s) received all eligible votes and another institution resulted in all eligible votes greater than the conflicted vote, this action shall result in a tiebreaker vote.
3. Each committee member will “rank” the eight teams, using a cross country scoring system (e.g., first or best is valued at one point).
4. The four teams receiving the fewest points shall be moved into the seed list, in rank order. The other four teams will be held for the next ballot.
5. The “list” eight, “rank” eight, “move” four in rank order process will be repeated until all teams have been seeded.
6. After a team has been voted into the seed list, it may be moved to a different position by a simple majority of eligible votes.
7. The committee is not obligated to seed the lines in chronological order. For example, at any time, the committee may use the procedures to determine the fourth quadrant of teams.

Additional Considerations

- At any time, the chair may call for a review of teams on the holding board. A majority of eligible votes can remove a team from or add a team to the holding board. Teams that have been removed from the holding board will return to the Not Seeded board.

III. Principles for Placing Teams into the Championship Bracket

The committee will attempt to achieve relative balance in the bracket and provide comparable competition, while abiding by the remaining principles. Balance does not mean equal. After all teams have been placed in the bracket, the committee will formally adopt the bracket.

- In true seed order, the committee will assign each team to a regional and first-/second-round site by taking into account distance from site, mode of transportation and accessibility by fans.
- The committee will assign all four teams in each bracket “group” (seed lines 1, 16, 8, 9), (seed lines 4, 13, 5, 12), (seed lines 2, 15, 7, 10), (seed lines 3, 14, 6, 11) to the same first-/second-round site. The first-/second-round sites that feed into a regional site may be in different geographic areas from the regional.
- The number one overall seeded team will be assigned to a regional pod with game days on Friday and Sunday.
- The committee will attempt to keep conference teams from meeting until the regional semifinal round.
- If the committee is unable to balance the bracket after exhausting all possible options, it has the flexibility to permit two teams from the same conference to meet each other in the first round.
- The 12 lowest-seeded at-large teams and the 12 lowest-seeded automatic qualifiers on the overall seed list will be paired to compete in the Opening Round games on Wednesday and Thursday following the announcement of the field. Provided all principles are met, the Opening Round games will consist of the last at-large team on the seed list will be paired with the second-to-last at-large team, the third-to-last at-large team playing the fourth-to-last at-large team, and so on. The other Opening Round games will feature seed 65 playing seed 66, 67 versus 68, 69 versus 70, 71 against 72, 73 against 74, and 75 playing 76.
- First- and second-round sites will be awarded to the top 16 seeded teams that submit a bid that meets the requirements for hosting.
- In the event that a top 16 seeded team does not submit a bid, or the bid does not meet requirements for hosting, the committee will select a host from the remaining submitted bids that meet the requirement for hosting. In order to adhere to the bracketing principles, it may not be possible to select the next highest seed to host.
- The Opening Round games will be assigned, one to each of 12 First- and Second-round sites, based on the bracket placement of teams participating in the Opening Round games.
- For the regional competition, a team may not be assigned to play in any arena in which it has played

more than three regular-season games, not including conference post-season tournaments.

- A team, outside of the top four seed lines, may be moved one bracket line from its true seed line (e.g., from a No. 13 seed line to a No. 12 seed line) when it is placed in the bracket, if necessary to meet the principles.

Procedures for Placing Teams into the Championship Bracket

1. The committee will place teams in the bracket in seed order.
2. Place the teams seeded 1-4 in each of the four regional pods pairing the No. 1 seed’s regional pod against the No. 4 seed’s regional pod and the No. 2 seed’s regional pod against the No. 3 seed’s regional pod. Place the Nos. 2, 3, 4 seeds in each regional pod.
3. In the top four seed lines, place the top 16 teams in seed order left to right on seed lines 1 and 3 and right to left on seed lines 2 and 4 to ensure equal competitive balance among all regional pods. *(See diagram below.)*

	Regional Pod	Regional Pod	Regional Pod	Regional Pod
Seed line 1	1.	2,	3.	4.
Seed line 2	8.	7.	6.	5.
Seed line 3	9.	10.	11.	12.
Seed line 4	16.	15.	14.	13.
<i>Balance</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>34</i>

4. In bracket line Nos. 5 through 16, the committee will use seed number to determine balance of the bracket.
5. After all teams have been placed in the bracket and the bracket assignments have been checked to ensure that the principles have been met, the committee will formally adopt the bracket.

Additional Considerations

After adhering to all principles for placing teams in the bracket, the committee will take into consideration the following items:

- If possible, avoid rematches of regular-season games in the Opening Round games and first- and second-rounds.
- Any principle can be relaxed if two or more teams from the same conference are among the last 12 at-large seeded teams participating in the Opening Round games.
- Avoiding rematches of previous years' tournament games in the Opening Round and/or firstround.
- After examining the previous two years' brackets, the committee shall attempt to avoid moving teams or conferences out of its natural region or geographic area an inordinate number of times.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association
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