

## Some typical admission policies

### Early Action

Students who apply under a college's Early Action plan receive a decision before the standard response date but are not required to accept an offer of admission or to make a deposit prior to May 1. Most Early Action deadlines are in November, December or January, with notification some weeks later. Approximately 200 colleges have Early Action plans. Students should be sure to read the college policy carefully. Some colleges have "single choice Early Action" plans. In these plans, colleges place some restrictions on the applicant's right to make applications to other Early Decision or Early Action plans.

### Early Decision

Students who apply under Early Decision commit to enroll at the college if they are admitted and offered a satisfactory financial aid package. Application deadlines are usually in mid-November, with a mid- to late-December notification date. Approximately 230 colleges have an Early Decision plan. Some colleges have both an Early Decision and an Early Action plan.

### Open Admission

Under this policy, a college admits students without regard to conventional academic qualifications, such as taking appropriate high school subjects and receiving suitable high school grades and admission-test scores. Virtually all applicants with high school diplomas or the equivalent are accepted. Most community colleges practice open admission, although many have requirements for certain programs — for example, nursing.

### Rolling Admission

In this frequently used procedure, a college considers each student's application as soon as all the required credentials, such as school record and test scores, have been received. The college usually notifies an applicant of its decision without delay. At many colleges, rolling admission allow for early notification and work much like nonbinding Early Action programs.

### Candidates Reply Date Agreement

A college subscribing to this agreement does not require applicants offered admission as first-year students to notify the college of their decision to attend (or to accept an offer of financial aid) before May 1 of the year the applicants apply. The purpose of the agreement is to give students time to hear from all the colleges to which they have applied before having to make a commitment to any of them.

**Source:** *The College Board*

### Handout 4D

## Should you apply under an Early Decision program?

### What is Early Decision?

Some colleges have an Early Decision (ED) plan. Under this plan, a student submits his or her credentials early (usually by Nov. 1 or Nov. 15) and signs a statement (binding) that he or she will accept the college's offer of admission.

### Who should apply for Early Decision?

Ideal candidates for ED should fit both of these profiles:

- You have researched colleges extensively (visited at least three or four) and are absolutely sure that College X is your first choice. If you are accepted under an Early Decision program, you have committed yourself to attending that college and must withdraw all other applications.
- You meet or exceed the admission profile of students at College X (i.e., your SAT® scores, GPA and class rank should be comparable to students at College X). You should have completed one round of the SAT and SAT Subject Tests™ by October of your senior year. Some colleges, however, will accept November test scores if the scores are rushed to the admission office. You have an academic record that has been consistently solid over time.

If you know that your senior-year grades will be much better than your grades in previous years, you may wish to apply under the regular admission program and allow the college to evaluate your improvement.

### What are the advantages of Early Decision programs?

Your application is reviewed early and you receive notification of your admission status by Dec. 15. If you are accepted, you avoid having to complete other applications. Your application is reviewed against a smaller applicant pool. (However, it is usually a much stronger pool than the group of candidates for regular admission.)

### What are the disadvantages of Early Decision programs?

Obviously, you could be rejected early. And next April, when other students receive their acceptances, you may end up wondering, "Could I have been accepted to Y University?" You might change your mind, but you are bound by contract to attend College X. Additionally, ED leaves applicants without leverage to negotiate better financial aid packages.

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## What are some of the mistakes students make in choosing to apply for Early Decision?

- applying to a college for ED when they have not researched/visited any other colleges
- applying early to a college just to avoid the paperwork and stress
- applying early because a friend is doing so

## What about financial aid?

When applying under an ED program, you fill out a preliminary financial aid form from the college. (Some colleges use the CSS Financial Aid/PROFILE® form available on the Internet at [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org).) You will be notified of your financial aid package at the time of your acceptance. The package will be determined by the college based on an assessment of your family's economic needs.

If financial aid is an essential factor for you in selecting a college, you may not wish to apply under an Early Decision program because you will not be able to compare your aid package with financial aid offers from other colleges.

## Questions

Direct your questions about Early Decision programs to your college of choice. Institutions can and do vary in their implementation of early programs. There are also numerous Early Action programs, which are nonbinding. Contact the colleges about the regulations of each program, as they can vary widely.

**Source:** *Carlene Riccelli, Amherst Regional High School, Massachusetts*