

Admissions Decision Plans

College Decision Plans fall into three major categories: *Regular, Rolling or Early*. Early options include additional variations: *Early Action (EA), Early Decision (ED) and Restrictive (or Single Choice) Early Action (REA)*.

If you are applying to in-state public universities you do not need to worry about these decision plans. Simply apply as early as possible and DO NOT miss their published deadlines.

Regular Decision

The majority of students apply Regular Decision (RD). Typically, the deadline for RD applications is in early January, though deadlines for many public universities can fall much earlier (UF is November 1st). Admission notifications occur around April 1. Accepted students must respond by May 1st.

Advantages of Regular Decision include:

- Unrestricted choice.
- Time to decide where you want to apply.
- Time to assemble a considered and strong application.
- Ability to submit your first semester senior year grades for consideration.
- Ability to take more standardized tests in November or December of your senior year.

Rolling Admissions

Colleges that offer Rolling Admission (RA) accept applications over a long time period that may begin as early as August, until all seats are filled. You may be notified of acceptance anytime before April. Your response is not required until May 1st. Since slots fill up, and in some schools, financial aid, merit scholarships, and housing choices may start to run low, *it is strongly advised that you apply early in the process rather than later*. If you apply earlier, your junior year record should be strong and your testing should be complete by the time of application.

Early Admission Plans

About 450 colleges offer Early Admissions, either *Early Action (EA)* or *Early Decision (ED)* plans (some offer both). Under these plans applications are usually due from mid-October to November, and most notifications of acceptance, denial or deferral are received by mid-December. At that time you may be rejected or deferred. Deferral means your application will be reconsidered with the Regular Decision pool.

If you choose to apply early, it is advised that you not delay in continuing the application process for your Regular Decision list. If you are denied or deferred, you have approximately two weeks after notification in mid-December to complete your Regular Decision applications.

Early Decision

Early Decision (ED) plans are *binding*, which means you commit to enroll in that school if you are admitted. You are allowed to apply early decision to only one college. If you are accepted

you will receive a financial aid package offer around the same time, you must withdraw any applications already submitted and you may not apply elsewhere.

Because an ED acceptance is a binding commitment, this choice must be very carefully weighed. Involving your parents early in this decision process is critical as your family will not be able to compare financial aid packages or merit scholarship offers between colleges. If financial aid is an absolute need, it is not a good idea to apply Early Decision. You will be required to sign an *Early Decision Agreement* by the College to which you are applying.

Some schools offer two rounds of Early Decision (ED I and II). ED II deadlines tend to occur just prior to Regular Decision deadlines in January.

Early Action

Early Action (EA) is a more flexible way to apply early. Almost all early action plans allow applicants to apply to other schools either early or regular. You will receive notification of acceptance, denial or deferral usually by mid-December. If you are accepted, you are not committed to enroll and have until May 1st to decide.

Restrictive Early Action

A few highly selective schools (notably Stanford, Princeton, Yale, Harvard and Georgetown) employ "restrictive" or "single choice" early action policies (REA or SCEA). With these programs you are restricted from applying early decision or early action to other private universities. Make certain you check each school's restrictions carefully and abide by those policies.

Advantages/Disadvantages of Applying Early

The advantages to applying early vary from school to school and from one applicant to another. There may be an advantage at colleges who put great emphasis on their Early Decision admissions, i.e., select a significant percentage of their incoming class from their ED pool. This can be determined by speaking with respective admissions offices.

While it's true that early applicant pools are smaller, students who apply early tend to have very strong profiles or belong to special circumstance groups. These pools while smaller, tend then to be much more competitive. Some argue that Early Decision II plans present some advantage in select cases as the application is often read before Regular Decision applications.

Links and FAQs

[Benefits and Drawbacks of Early Decision and Early Action](#)