

## Early Decision and Early Action

If you find a college that you're sure is right for you, consider applying early. Early decision and early action plans allow you to apply early (usually in November) and get an admission decision from the college well before the usual spring notification date. You know by December or January whether you've been accepted at your first-choice college.

Sometimes, students who apply under these plans have a better chance of acceptance than they would through the regular admission process. These plans are also good for colleges because they get students who really want to go to the college to commit early in the process.

### **Early Decision vs. Early Action**

You should understand the differences between early decision and early action before sending in your applications. Keep in mind that the rules may vary somewhat by college. Below are some important facts about the types of early-application plan.

**Early decision plans are binding.** You agree to attend the college if it accepts you and offers an adequate financial aid package. Although you can apply to only one college for early decision, you may apply to other colleges through the regular admission process. If you're accepted by your first-choice college early, you must withdraw all other applications.

**Early action plans are similar to early decision plans, but are not binding.** If you've been accepted, you can choose to commit to the college immediately, or wait until the spring. Under these plans, you may also apply early action to other colleges. Usually, you have until the late spring to let the college know your decision.

**Single-choice early action is a new option offered by a few colleges.** This plan works the same way as other early action plans, but candidates may not apply early (either early action or early decision) to any other college. You can still apply to other colleges under regular decision plans and are not required to give your final answer to the early-application college until the regular decision deadline.

Application Type	Binding	Can Apply Early to Other Colleges	Can Apply to Other Colleges Under Regular Admission
Early Decision	Yes	No	Yes
Early Action	No	Yes	Yes
Single-Choice Early Action	No	No	Yes

### **Should I Apply Under One of These Plans?**

You should apply under an early decision or early action plan only if you are very sure of the college you want to attend. Do not apply under an early decision or early action plan if you plan to weigh offers and financial aid packages from several colleges later in the spring. Also, you shouldn't apply early if it would be beneficial to have more of your senior year work to show a college.

### **Which Colleges Offer Early Plans?**

More than 400 colleges offer an early decision plan, an early action plan, or both.

### **A Last Word of Advice**

In the fall, it may seem appealing to get the college decision over with, but you may want to keep your options open during senior year as you learn more about colleges and your own preferences. On the other hand, you may be confident that you'll thrive at a certain college. If so, you're the type of student early decision was created for.