

## Should You Apply Early Admission?

Deciding whether to apply early is a big fork in the road to college. As tempting as it may seem, it is not a decision to be made lightly.

Some of your friends may be cheering the fact that their application stress will be over before the holidays. Should you join them?

### Applying Early Is Perfect for Some—and a Bad Move for Others

If you are thinking of applying early—either early decision or early action—ask yourself these three questions:

1. **Am I happy with my grades and test scores?** If not, you will be better off using fall semester to improve them and applying during the regular admissions cycle.
2. **Do I know what I want in a college based on extensive campus visits and research?** If not, you may end up at a college you won't like. Skip applying early and dedicate time to finding out what you really want in a college.
3. **Do I need substantial financial aid?** If so, you are better off skipping an early decision application so you can compare and negotiate aid offers from multiple colleges.

### The Two Types of Early Admission

[Early Decision](#) is binding. If you are accepted—and you get enough aid—you must attend. You are allowed to apply to only one college for an early decision.

[Early Action](#) is not binding. You are usually free to apply elsewhere and you are not obligated to attend if accepted.

### More Food for Thought

**Does applying early boost your chances?** Applying early, especially for an early decision, shows the college you are interested. However, many highly qualified and recruited students apply early, so the odds are just about as competitive as for regular admissions.

**Early rejections can lead to hastily completed regular applications.** You might be tempted to delay work on regular admission applications until you've heard from your "early" colleges. But if you do, you'll scramble to meet admission deadlines, and risk submitting less-than-stellar applications.

**Resist the urge to "just get it over with."** No doubt about it, an early acceptance can relieve some of your application stress. But there's a big payoff to taking time to put together a well-researched list of colleges and weathering the stress of applying to each one. Your reward is ending up at a college where you know you will thrive.

**An early application might lead to a deferral.** One outcome of applying early is being "deferred" to the regular application pool. The college is not saying "no," but it is looking for more reasons to say "yes." If this happens, your best strategy is to work hard to earn top grades throughout your senior year and show your interest to the admissions office.

## Is Early Decision Right for You?

One way to cut down your waiting time is to apply for an early decision. But what are the trade-offs? And does the early bird really have a better chance of getting in?

Asking for an early decision means you are committed to attending that college if accepted. Your application is usually due in November, and you will know your fate before your winter break.

### How Early Decision Works

You are allowed to apply for an early decision to only one college. If you are accepted by that school, you must attend it. You must withdraw all applications already submitted and you may not apply elsewhere. There is only one exception: If the school does not meet your financial need, you are free to decline admission and apply to other colleges.

### Applying Early Decision Means You Are Committed

Because you must enroll in the college if it accepts you, the worst thing you can do is apply for an early decision from a college you know little about. Be sure you have done plenty of college visits and research so you are utterly convinced that this is the best college for you.

### Deciding on Early Decision—or Not

#### Early Decision vs. Early Action

About 15 percent of colleges offer [early action](#), which provides an early admission decision without a commitment to enroll. These schools usually allow early applications to other colleges at the same time.

Generally, colleges that offer early decision do not allow students to apply to another college for an early decision, but some will allow students to apply elsewhere under early action.

If your top-choice college offers early decision and you feel prepared and ready to apply, then go for it. However, there are times when applying for an early decision might not be the best idea. If getting substantial financial aid is critical, you are better off applying for a regular decision. That way, you can compare and negotiate aid offers before choosing a college. If there's a chance you can improve your grades and scores, you will also be better off applying in the regular admission cycle.

Be aware that applying for an early decision does not necessarily boost your chances, since early applicants are often better qualified than regular applicants.

#### How to Apply for an Early Decision

You will have to start the application process a few months earlier than most applicants and complete your standardized tests no later than October. Otherwise, early decision applications are the same as regular applications.

#### Suppose You Don't Make the First Cut?

The college may automatically add you to the regular admission application pool. If it does not, you are usually (but not always) free to reapply by the regular admission deadline. Check the admission policies of the college.

Source: CollegeData.com

