



COLLEGE APPLICATION TYPES AND DEADLINES

Let's review the four types of college application options and their requirements and deadlines.

The four types of college application options are **early decision (ED)**, **early action (EA)**, **regular decision (RD)**, and **rolling admissions (RA)**. All have different requirements and different, but critical, deadlines. If your application is stellar, but not submitted on time, it's likely never to be reviewed at all.

When preparing to apply, **carefully research each school's policy**. Early action schools sometimes place restrictions on your applications to other colleges. Early decision requires a commitment to enroll if you get accepted, even before you know what your financial aid offer will be, and that binding contract can put families in a difficult financial situation if they aren't prepared for it.

Make sure you understand the application rules and the financial aid options, before choosing how you will apply to each school.

Below we've compiled a general guide to the types of college applications and their timelines. Every school is different, so it's important to review each school's policy before you apply.

EARLY DECISION

Early decision deadlines are a **few months earlier** than regular decision. They fall sometime between October and mid-November. You should receive your answer sometime in December, often before regular decision applications are due. Additionally, there is one critical point to understand. If you're accepted to a college through early decision, **you are committed to enroll** at that school. By applying early decision, you're essentially saying, "This is my first choice school, and if accepted I will attend no matter what." Colleges give special consideration to early decision applicants because of their show of commitment. However, there is one particular drawback.

When applying early decision. You must commit to your acceptance **without any financial aid information**. Before you choose this option, you should know what percent of your demonstrated financial need will be met and/or if there will be any negotiation available if your offer isn't what you expected.

EARLY ACTION

Early action deadlines are similar to early decision, and require your applications are completed sometime between **October and mid-November**. As with early decision, should receive your answer sometime in December.

You can get accepted, denied, or sometimes deferred—meaning your application goes into the regular application pool to be reviewed again.



COLLEGE APPLICATION TYPES AND DEADLINES (continued)

More and more students apply early, so deferrals are becoming more common. Don't consider a deferral as a "no," but be sure to follow up with updated grades or test scores as needed.

With early action applications, you are not obligated to accept admission, and **you still have until May 1 to send your acceptance**. Not all schools offer early action, but if they do, the benefit is extra time that allows you to compare your acceptances and their financial aid offers before making your decision.

REGULAR DECISION

Regular decision applications are the most common, and **typically due January 1**, sometimes January 15 of your senior year. Because each college's application policy is different, it is important to confirm the actual deadline on their website. Once colleges receive the applications, they review them, make their decisions, and send acceptance letters in March or early April. Students have until May 1, commonly known as "college decision day," to accept. You can apply to as many schools as you like, and choose your favorite from those that accept you. No restrictions.

ROLLING ADMISSIONS

Most schools have specific application deadlines, but some offer rolling admissions. This means there's a **broad window of time** in which the college receives applications. Acceptance letters can come based on when you apply, but you still have until May 1 to make your decision. RA applications aren't binding, so you have no obligation to enroll if accepted.

RA applications are reviewed on a **first-come, first-served** basis, so spots can fill early. As the acceptances increase, competition for remaining spots gets tougher, so it's critical to get rolling admissions applications in early. The earlier you apply, the better your chances.

PLAN AHEAD

It's important to plan ahead no matter how or when you apply. Review the application policy for each school, keep track of your deadlines, and make sure you've compiled all of the documents and information required for your application including GPA, SAT or ACT scores, essays, and recommendation letters.

Don't wait until the last minute. Consider setting your own deadline ahead of the required deadline so you have a little extra time if you run into delays or difficulties.

All of us at Elite Collegiate Planning wish you the best with your college application process.