

Applying Early

Referencing Huffington Post *“The Truth About Applying Early Decision or Early Action”*

What's the Difference?

- **Early Decision (ED):** This choice is for students who have identified a college as a definite first choice. Early decision is binding, meaning if you apply to a school ED, you are committing to enrolling upon admission and must withdraw all other applications when an acceptance is granted. Because it is binding, you can only apply to one school ED.
- **ED I and ED II:** Some schools have two ED deadlines, one in November and a second in December, closer to the Regular Decision deadline. ED II is for students who are committed to applying ED to their top-choice school, but aren't necessarily ready for the early November deadline. Again these are binding.
- **Early Action (EA):** This is similar to ED except you are not required to attend if admitted, therefore it is nonbinding. You can apply to many schools EA, as long as all of them are non-binding.
- **Single-Choice Early Action (SCEA):** Also known as restrictive early action, this option is also nonbinding, however you cannot apply other schools EA or ED until you receive your decision from the school to which you applied SCEA. You can still apply to nonbinding public or state universities EA.

Advantages

- **Better admission rates.** When you apply early, you're entering into a smaller applicant pool, albeit just as competitive as the regular decision pool. However, early admit rates still tend to be higher when compared to the regular or overall admission rates for a school. Some can even be two to three times higher. Some schools admit as high as 20% of their incoming class from the EA/ED pool.
- **Knowing your admissions decision sooner.** Those who apply early usually get their admissions decisions back by mid-to-late December. Depending on whether you're accepted, denied, or deferred, you can begin to put forth a plan of action. You might want to secure enrollment if you're admitted, finalize other applications for regular admission if you're denied, or write a letter and seek expert guidance on next steps if you're deferred to the regular round. If you're accepted – celebrate earlier!
- **Demonstrating your interest.** It's no secret that schools want to admit students who really want to attend. The presence of demonstrated interest, or the school's gauge of how likely you are to attend if admitted, [has become more of a consideration in the college admissions process](#). One way to demonstrate your interest is by applying early. Especially if the school has a binding early admissions policy, applying early is the most effective way to show your commitment to the institution.

Drawbacks

- **Preparation in advance of your peers.** You have to be ready. Applying early isn't just so you can get your applications out-of-the-way; it's for students who have decided on a top choice school and have all their materials ready to go.
- **Weak Transcripts or scores.** If you apply early but your junior year grades weren't the best, you could be hurting yourself by not waiting to see if your fall semester grades show improvement. The same applies to standardized test scores. If everything is ready to go but you're waiting on fall ACT or SAT scores, applying before they are available can hurt your chances of admission.