

# Woolf College Consulting



## COUNTDOWN TO NOVEMBER

### *Find Out Whether You Should Apply to College Under an Early Admission Plan*

Is time running out for you to apply to college? That depends on your goals and on the individual colleges application options and acceptance rates.

You probably have heard that large numbers of college freshmen are selected “early,” usually receiving decisions from the colleges in mid-December. Should you jump on the bandwagon, too?

If you aren’t familiar with the “early” college application options, here they are in a nutshell:

- ***Early Decision:*** A student applicant signs a contract agreeing to attend that one particular college if he or she is accepted. Although the student may apply to other colleges, he or she must withdraw these applications if that acceptance comes through. This option is recommended for a student who has done the research and clearly has a first-choice college.
- ***Early Action:*** Although the student applies early and receives an expedited decision from a college, he or she does not have to decide whether to attend until spring. The student may also apply to other schools and accept another college’s offer of admission instead.

- ***Single Choice Early Action:*** Although the student applies early, he or she may be restricted in applying to other early programs through Early Decision or Early Action. Typically, a student may still apply to a public university, although it's always best to check the restrictions for an individual college because they can vary. Of course, a student may apply to another college's second round Early Decision program (see below) if he or she does not get into the Single Choice School.
- ***Restrictive Early Action:*** Similar to Early Action, REA also limits the student's freedom to apply through other early plans. The extent of the restriction depends on the college. Restrictions may vary from school to school, so it's wise to check the provisos for any college that offers restrictive early action.
- ***Early Decision II/Early Action II:*** Some schools entertain early applications over two time periods. These schools refer to their early applications as Early Decision I and Early Decision II or Early Action I and Early Action II. Early II application deadlines are later than Early I, which gives students more time to decide where to apply. Plus, a student who has applied early to a college and has been rejected can still apply to a second college and receive an expedited decision.
- ***The Mix:*** A number of schools have a variety of early application plans, including both Early Action and Early Decision.
- ***Rolling Decision:*** The admissions committee at some schools reviews an application soon after it is received, makes a decision and notifies the student. The process typically takes between three and six weeks after the student's file has been completed. That means that the student has applied and all supporting materials have been received, such as recommendations, standardized test scores if applicable, and the high school transcript and school profile.
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## **Does early decision really give a student an admissions advantage?**

It depends on the college, but it often does. To find out, you may need to do some digging on a particular college's web site or you can try calling the college's Admissions Office and asking these questions:

- 1) What percent of the class is admitted early?
- 2) What percent of early applicants are admitted to the school and what percent of regular decision applicants are admitted?

Try to get information on the most recent freshman class if it is available and one or two prior classes. Recently, more and more colleges are accepting half of their classes through early programs.

## **Are there drawbacks to applying early?**

Yes. If financial aid is a consideration, a student applying Early Decision (the binding option) foregoes the opportunity to compare financial aid packages among schools. That doesn't mean that a financial aid package awarded to an Early Decision applicant is necessarily *bad*; it just means the family has lost the opportunity to weigh one package against another. Financial aid awards do vary from school to school, because institutional priorities and the amount of available aid vary from school to school. The process is similar to the process of admitting students. There are no guarantees.

Financial issues aside, if a student has a mediocre high school record, it still may be a good idea to apply later rather than earlier. The first half of senior year is the time to show colleges that the student has gotten his or her act together. Colleges are looking for a bellwether of future college success, no matter how late in the high school career it arrives.