

# COLLEGE ADMISSIONS OPTIONS: *EARLY DECISION, EARLY ACTION, ROLLING & REGULAR*

*Find out the best way to submit your college application.*

Colleges generally offer prospective students a variety of ways to submit their applications. After you've narrowed down your choices, check the admissions policy and deadline for each school on your college list. Understanding how these policies work will guide your application process and help you determine your college planning timeline.

Regardless of the option you choose, it's best to submit your application by Thanksgiving of your senior year. This gives you the best change for admission and the most opportunities for getting scholarships and other financial aid. In the worst-case scenario, if you don't get into the university of your choice, you'll know by January, which means you still have time to implement a back up option (like a school with rolling admissions).

***Don't assume that all colleges and universities have similar application deadlines. As you do your college search, keep track of each school's deadlines for applications and financial aid so you don't miss any opportunities.***

*Learn about the different types of college admissions to determine which is best for you.*

## The Main Types of College Admissions Options

Different types of schools generally offer various types of college admissions options.

### REGULAR ADMISSIONS

This is the most common option for four-year colleges and universities. All students must submit their applications by a specific date, usually between November and January. The admissions board then reviews all the applications and sends out acceptances and rejection letters on the same date.

### ROLLING ADMISSIONS

Common at large state universities, schools that provide rolling admissions allow students to apply at any time during their admissions period; typically, September through July. The school then evaluates each college application as it's received and sends acceptance letters to students who meet their requirements. Since admission is granted on a first-come, first-serve basis, you'll want to submit your application as early as possible.

## **OPEN ADMISSIONS**

Typically, community colleges, online schools and distance learning programs offer this type of enrollment. Open admission means that nearly all high school graduates are admitted, provided they have a diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate. Students who have a lower than average GPA in their high school courses may want to find a college with this policy. If there is no community college in your area that matches your interests, online schools are a great alternative for furthering your education.

## **EARLY ADMISSIONS OPTIONS**

If you have one or two schools that are your absolute dream colleges, you should consider one of the early admissions options. However, while applying to college early and enjoying your senior year without the typical acceptance stress may seem tempting, you need to make sure you don't lock yourself in to a school and then change your mind.

If you're sure, applying early lets universities know they're your number one choice, which could improve your chance of acceptance. Learn more about the different options and how your admission works with these methods.

## **EARLY DECISION**

Under this admissions program, you agree to attend this school if accepted, and you can't apply to any other college or university. If you receive an acceptance letter, you must withdraw any other applications to other schools. Since this option is binding, you need to be sure about your choice and realistic about your application. Make sure you get your guidance counselor's opinion before you submit an application with early decision.

## **EARLY ACTION**

Like early decision, you are applying only to your top-choice school. However, unlike early decision, you are not bound to attend if accepted and you can apply early action to more than one university. You can accept an offer as soon as you receive it or wait to make your final selection in the spring after you've found out where else you've been accepted.

## **EARLY EVALUATION**

Selecting this choice means you can apply early to find out whether your chances for acceptance are good, fair or poor. Your application usually needs to be submitted by November, and you'll be sent a determination by December or January.

Not every college student begins attending college the fall after they graduate high school. You may be ready to start college before your high school graduation, or your personal circumstances may make you want to postpone enrollment. If that describes you, find a college that allow for deferred admissions.

## DEFERRED ADMISSIONS

A student picking this option means they have been accepted to a particular college or university but want to defer their enrollment for a year. Consider taking a gap year if you want to travel abroad, obtain more financial aid, work or explore possible careers through internships.

## QUICK TIPS

If you're relying on financial aid to pay for college, you may not want to apply early decision because you'll receive your acceptance before you know what financial aid package you'll receive. However, a college admission counselor can give you an estimate of the financial package you will receive before you apply.

Don't assume that all colleges and universities have similar application deadlines. As you do your college search, keep track of each school's deadlines for applications and financial aid so you don't miss any opportunities.

Some schools have begun to offer single-choice early action. Like the traditional early action, you are not bound to attend if admitted, but you are only able to apply early to one school.