

Early Decision & Early Action

The benefits and drawbacks of applying early

Early decision (ED) and early action (EA) plans can be beneficial to students — but only to those who have thought through their college options carefully and have a clear preference for one institution.

Early decision versu

- Has found a college that is a strong match academically, socially and geographically.
- Meets or exceeds the admission profile for the college for SAT® scores, GPA and class rank.
- Has an academic record that has been consistently solid over time.

Applying to an ED or EA plan is not appropriate for a student who:

- Has not thoroughly researched colleges.
- Is applying early just to avoid stress and paperwork.
- Is not fully committed to attending the college.
- Is applying early only because friends are.
- Needs a strong senior fall semester to bring grades up.

The ethics of applying early decision

The Common Application and some colleges' application forms require the student applying under early decision, as well as the parent and counselor, to sign an ED agreement form spelling out the plan's conditions.

Make it clear in your school handbook and at college planning events that your policy for early-decision applications is to send the student's final transcript to one college only: anything else is unethical.

Keep in mind

- ED and EA program specifics vary, so students should get information as soon as possible directly from the admission staff at their first-choice college.
- ED and EA applicants must take the October SAT or SAT Subject Tests™ in order for these scores to make it to the college in time.

Print out and share the [Early Decision and Early Action Calendar](#) with students and parents to be sure they are aware of all the required steps for applying early.