

For students and parents

Options and Deadlines

(Note: though much of this article is addressed to the student, the information in it is equally important to parents.)

For every application you complete and intend to send there will be schedules and deadlines to which you must adhere. Note that in general, a deadline is the date by which an application must be *sent, physically or electronically*. However, for a few colleges, the deadline is the date by which the application must be *received*. If in doubt, call the admission office well ahead of the deadline and ask. *As a general rule, you should treat all deadlines as if they were the receipt date. Doing so will help ensure that you get everything in on time.*

The different possibilities are defined as follows:

Regular Admission

Under a regular admission schedule, the student applies by a certain deadline, usually between January 1 and March 1, and is notified of a decision on or shortly after a specific date, most often between March 15 and April 15.

Rolling Admission

Colleges that use rolling admission will review a candidate's credentials shortly after they are received (usually not before the end of the first high-school marking period of the senior year), and will notify the candidate of its decision within a few weeks. The student generally does not have to tell the college whether he or she will be attending until May 1. As a rule, the stronger the student, the earlier he or she may receive a letter of acceptance. *Note that in these competitive times, many rolling admissions institutions become more selective as the year goes on.* It may be best, therefore, to apply early in the year. Always check with your counselor about timing.

Early Decision (and Early Decision II)

Students who return for their senior year planning to "go ED" have *one* college that they have researched and are absolutely sure they would like to attend. The Early Decision deadline is much earlier than the regular one, often November 1, and the student is usually notified of the college's decision one month later. Because of this early deadline, students must keep in mind that colleges will not see fall term grades before they render an admission decision. Their decision will be based on grades through the end of your junior year. If your junior year grades are not as strong as you would have hoped, you should discuss the ED decision with your college counselor. It may be wise to wait until fall term marks are in and apply ED Round II, if it is available.

One of three decisions is possible: Accept, Defer, or Deny. An *accepted* student is ethically committed to attending the college and must withdraw any other active applications. Students who are *deferred* are simply put back in the pile and looked at again with the regular pool of applicants. If deferred, they are no longer committed to attending the college should they be accepted later in the year. Some colleges have a policy of *denying* Early Decision applicants they deem unqualified. While an outright denial can hurt, it does relieve the anxiety of having to wait another four or five months for a decision. Obviously, a student may submit only one Early Decision application at a time. However, several institutions have ED I and ED II deadlines for students who were not ready to submit an Early Decision application

earlier in the year. Other institutions have Early Decision deadlines that are relatively late—for example, January 1—which serve the same purpose as ED II. Early Decision candidates must be ready to apply to other colleges immediately in the event that they do not receive an acceptance of their ED application.

Unfortunately, many colleges now use Early Decision as a marketing tool, designed to make them look more selective. In a nutshell, the result of this practice is that many institutions are somewhat easier to get into when one applies early. It is essential to ask admission offices about their ED policies in this regard. If you do not get a satisfactory answer—which sometimes you will not—speak with your counselor before making any commitment.

Early Action

This plan is similar to Early Decision except that there is no commitment on the part of the student to attend if accepted. You may apply Early Action to more than one school, with the exception of a few institutions that follow a “Restricted Early Action” policy. With these, you may apply EA to more than one school, but you may not submit an ED application at the same time.

Since colleges change their application plans constantly, it is imperative to check with each school before submitting an application.

The Candidate’s Reply Date

This is the date by which a student *must* say either yes or no to a college, and beyond which no extensions are possible. Most colleges have agreed on *May 1* as the Candidate’s Reply Date unless the student has applied and been accepted under the Early Decision plan. However, some do not observe it and will ask the student to send a confirming deposit within two or three weeks. If this happens to you, and you do not want to send your money to one college until you have heard from others, you can almost always call or write the college and get an extension, usually until May 1. They may tell you they still want the deposit, but that it is refundable until that time. When in doubt, speak to one of the college counselors. Students should not, however, expect to be allowed to put off their decision until sometime after May 1. Colleges need and have the right to expect a commitment from an accepted applicant at some point, and a May 1 deadline should give most people enough time to make up their minds. Usually, “making up one’s mind” involves sending a substantial deposit—several hundred dollars—to the college one has decided to attend. *UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES may deposits ever be sent to more than one college!* “Double-depositing” is wrong and unethical. *The College Counseling Office must inform colleges that it has taken place, which may well result in the candidate’s rejection by both institutions.*

Waiting List

The waiting list is a form of “insurance policy” used by many colleges as a hedge against the possibility of unfilled places in an entering class. There is no way to predict a student’s chances of admission from the waiting list, as circumstances and conditions vary each year. In almost all cases, wait lists are not ranked; rather, all wait-list students are reevaluated shortly after May 1. The number of wait-list candidates offered acceptance depends upon the number of places still to be filled. *Students should choose to remain on a college’s wait list only if they are seriously interested in attending that institution.* They will have to send a deposit to another college to hold a place; doing so in this situation is not considered “double-depositing.” If interest is not strong, students should remove their names from waiting lists to give their place to someone else. We counsel wait-listed seniors carefully, suggesting specific strategies that may help their chances of admission.

Finally, here is a list of the College Counseling Office's "internal" deadlines of which you must be aware:

- **Early Decision:** You must make your request for an early decision mailing *in writing* to the College Counseling Office at least two weeks before the college's deadline. This means that for a November 1 ED deadline, you must inform us by October 15.
- **Regular:** For all other colleges with specific deadlines, you must inform us *in writing* that you are applying at least two weeks before the deadline.
- **Rolling Admissions:** Materials may be submitted any time after the first trimester (late November) and will be processed within two weeks. **Important:** You may be pressured by some admission offices into sending in a rolling admissions application as early as possible, even in October. *Doing so is not always in your best interest. Always consult with someone in the College Counseling Office before you ask us to send a transcript early.*

If you make your request late, we will do our best to get materials out on time. However, we work on a first-come, first-served basis, so if we have a great many applications to process, those submitted late will be sent last.

Your intention to apply to a given college or university must be communicated *in writing* to the College Counseling Office, as must any subsequent changes to your list. Simple forms for this purpose are available in the office. Only by using these forms can we keep an accurate and updated list of where to send your materials on time. *Failure to keep the College Counseling Office informed in a timely fashion can result in an incomplete application and eventual denial of admission.*