

SAN LUIS OBISPO HIGH SCHOOL COLLEGE & CAREER CENTER

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS

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Early Action, Early Decision, Restrictive Early Action, Rolling...Do early admission programs at colleges have you baffled? Deadlines will begin to hit in a few weeks, and it's important to understand the various rules, commitments, advantages and disadvantages so that you don't miss out on opportunities. Many colleges are now filling a significant number of freshmen seats through early admissions, so it can be great way to enhance your chances for acceptance, reduce stress with early notification, and scoop the best financial aid packages!

Early Decision (ED)

Students may only apply to ONE college Early Decision, and it is a binding agreement which states that if accepted, you will attend*, ED deadlines usually fall in November or December, and students are notified in about 4-8 weeks whether they have been accepted, rejected or deferred to the regular decision pool. If you are deferred, your ED commitment ends and you are no longer obligated to attend that college if you are accepted in the spring. Most colleges** do not restrict ED students from applying to other colleges Early Action. The advantage to ED is that acceptance rates can be significantly higher during this period. Brown accepted about 9% of applicants overall last year, but about 19% of ED applicants. It can also reduce the stress of senior year to know that you are into your first choice college before the second semester. The disadvantage is that if you need to compare financial aid packages, you won't have the opportunity to do that. It also locks students into one school relatively early in senior year, a year in which many students college preferences change. So, you should only apply ED if you have a CLEAR and DEFINITE first choice.

Early Decision II

This plan follows the same principles as ED above, but is a later second round of Early Decision that some colleges are adding. It often falls a month or two after ED I and allows students a bit more time to solidify their commitment. In some cases, if a student is rejected or deferred in the ED I round at one college, they may be able to play out ED II at a second school (but only if they have received a letter of rejection or deferral before the ED II deadline).

Early Action (ED) and Priority Plans

These are much less restrictive programs than early Decision because students may apply to several colleges under Early Action and Priority Decision rules, but they have until the spring to tell a college if they will attend. Deadlines usually fall in November and December, and decisions are issued in about 4-8 weeks.



COLLEGE TIPS

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Early Action (ED) and Priority Plans (continued)

Students can be accepted, rejected or deferred to regular decision. Although not quite as favorable statistically as ED, many colleges do accept a higher percentage of students during EA. The advantage is that if accepted, some students find senior year less stressful. There are very few disadvantages since you aren't locked into attending under EA or Priority plans. Families can also play out all their financial aid options at a variety of schools (unlike ED), and some colleges issue more favorable aid packages earlier in the admissions season when money is more plentiful.

Restrictive or Single Choice Early Action

A few colleges like Georgetown, Yale and Boston College have opted to craft specific rules for their Early Action programs which may preclude you from applying to other colleges Early Decision or Early Action. You must read the individual rules very carefully for these programs, they vary from school to school.

Rolling Admission

Colleges with Rolling Admission usually issue a decision within 2-6 weeks of all your admissions information being received. Some schools begin reviewing applications as early as September, but most start in November. The early bird catches the worm in rolling admissions, and it is generally easier to be accepted in the fall vs. later in the winter as seats fill. There is no obligation for you to attend when you are accepted under rolling admission plans, and again early applicants often see more favorable financial and packages.

*The only reason that students may decline an offer under Early Decision is if the college cannot meet their financial needs as demonstrated on the FAFSA form.

**Brown University does not allow Early Decision applicants to apply to other colleges early