

Early Action Deadlines

Many schools offer early action deadlines, which allow students to apply early and find out whether they were accepted ahead of the regular admission pool.

While the most common early action deadlines are in early to mid-November, you should check with each of your prospective schools. By applying early action, you can expect to receive an admission decision around December.

Early action is a great option for students who want an early admission decision without having to commit to a school. Unlike early decision, early action doesn't require you to commit to attending that particular school should you get admitted. It also doesn't require a response until the national May 1 deadline, giving students ample time to compare college offers.

Another potential outcome of applying early action is deferment, or when your application is pushed to the regular decision applicant pool. Although nobody wants to be deferred, this response provides students with the opportunity to reach out to the school and strengthen their application for regular decision admittance.

Early Decision Deadlines

Early decision resembles early action in that students apply to a college and hear back early, typically by mid-December. Unlike early action, however, early decision comes with a binding agreement to enroll.

In other words, once you're accepted, you must pay the nonrefundable deposit and withdraw all of your other college applications. This is why students applying early decision should be completely set on attending a particular school.

One major caveat of early decision is that you're entering an agreement without seeing your financial aid offer. For those depending on financial aid to cover the majority of their tuition, this can pose a serious concern.

Some schools may help you explore additional aid options, but adjustments aren't guaranteed. As such, early decision may not be a viable option for every student.

Regular Decision Deadlines

Most students apply to college under regular decision; these deadlines most commonly fall in January or February. Students often hear back from their prospective schools in March or April and are required to follow up with a response by May 1.

As one of the widest application windows, regular decision offers students ample time to gather materials, prepare their essays, and take tests. These deadlines can also give you additional time to carefully consider your college options.

The downside of waiting until the final window means that if you're deferred or even rejected, you'd have to wait until the following semester or academic year to reapply.

Rolling Admission and Transfer Application Deadlines

Rather than maintaining set deadlines, colleges with rolling admission evaluate applications as they come in and usually offer several application windows each year. In general, these schools accept and review applications until all spots in the upcoming class are filled.

While schools' application windows can vary widely, most institutions open up admissions early in the fall around September 1. This window can last all the way through spring, depending on how many spots remain, though some schools may follow the May 1 college deadline.

A rolling admission policy is one that many schools use to evaluate transfer applicants as well. Transfer students should begin the application process well ahead of their prospective school's posted application deadline. Each school maintains its own application window and transfer credit policies, so make sure you carefully read over the requirements before applying.

Although there's a chance your high school transcript may come into consideration, it's more likely that your transfer school's admissions board will evaluate your college transcript. All transfer students should request letters of recommendation, obtain official college transcripts, and submit their applications