

Understanding Admission Types

Early Decision:

It is not an obligation to be taken lightly, since colleges honor one another's binding decisions. If you renege on an early decision obligation to one school, it is unlikely that another competitive school will accept you. Students can seek release from an early decision obligation on the grounds of financial hardship, if the financial aid package they are offered is genuinely inadequate; however, the burden of proof in these cases is on the student. (By the way, an important drawback to early decision admissions is that they leave applicants with no leverage to negotiate a better financial aid package - the school knows you can't go anywhere else.)

Early decision applicants are expected to submit only one early decision application to one school. They can submit applications to other Colleges under normal application procedures, but agree that they will withdraw all those applications if they are accepted to the early decision school.

Early Action:

Early admissions programs, which do not ask applicants to commit to attending if they are accepted are generally known as Early Action (EA) programs. They give students the benefits of early notification without the obligations of early decision. Even if accepted, students are free to apply to other Colleges and to compare financial aid offers.

Single Choice Early Action:

Single choice early action (SCEA) programs specifically require students not to make EA applications to other Colleges, although they are free to apply elsewhere under the regular admissions round.

Rolling Admission

Colleges that use rolling admissions accept applications until they've filled all the spots in their freshman class. Decisions are then made on a case-by-case basis and you'll usually hear back within 4 to 8 weeks. However, some colleges accept applications under a rolling-admission policy and then send out decisions all at once.

There may also be less competition, but this depends on you. If you apply in December, the school won't wait until March to compare you with all the other applicants and you could actually improve your chances of being accepted. Remember though, the reverse also holds true: the later you apply, the more competition there may be for fewer spots. Procrastinators beware! There is a lot of truth to that old saying, "You snooze, and you lose!"

Applying to a school with rolling admissions late in the game can also impact your financial aid offer. A school's admission and aid policies are not one and the same. In fact, they usually come from offices that are nowhere near one another. If you're accepted after the free money's been doled out, you could be out of luck and limited to taking out loans.

Regular Admission:

Colleges using this plan generally have a January, February or March application deadline and notify all of the applicants at the same time (no later than April 15).

What is the Common Application?

The Common Application (Common App) allows students to fill out a single application and send it over 500 member colleges or universities. Some schools are Common App exclusive, while others still have their own application separate from the Common App. Occasionally, member of the Common App will add supplemental questions or essays for their specific institutions. For a list of member schools and to set up your account, go to www.commonapp.org.

Is the GAFutures Application the Common Application?

No. GAFutures is a common application platform that many in-state schools utilize for their application. Each school will have a completely different application within GAFutures if they have chosen to use this online platform.