



COLLEGE PLANNING



Is An Early-Application Process Right For You?

by Toby Waldorf

(NAPSA)—If you're thinking about going to college, you're probably familiar with the terms "Early Decision" and "Early Action."

More than 400 colleges offer these plans, so they're worth considering. Both plans let you apply to a college on an earlier deadline, usually in November.

In both cases, the college will notify you earlier as well, usually between December and February.



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The primary—and very important—difference between the two is that Early Decision acceptances are binding, whereas Early Action acceptances are not.

This means that if you're accepted through Early Decision, you'll have to withdraw your applications from any other colleges you've applied to under regular-admission deadlines.

With Early Action, you're allowed to wait to hear from those other colleges before committing. In addition, because Early Decision acceptances are binding, also, you'll generally have to send in a deposit to hold your place at the school. By contrast, if you're accepted at an Early Action school, the deposit won't usually be due until May 1.

Early Action plans come in two varieties: single-choice and unrestricted. Not surprisingly, "single-choice" means you're allowed to

apply Early Action to only that school. "Unrestricted" means you can apply to more than one Early Action school, as long as you make sure they're all unrestricted.

When thinking about these plans, it's important to keep a few things in mind. For instance, do you have the time to do a great job on your application early in the school year, or would you benefit from more time to revise? Do your grades and activities from the first three years of high school adequately demonstrate your potential, or would an additional semester help bolster your application? Would it be useful for you to consider acceptances and financial-aid offers before deciding for sure?

Some people believe that the Early Decision and Early Action applicants are better qualified overall than those in the Regular Admissions pool, meaning that if you're not clearly a top candidate, you might be better off applying at the regular deadline.

It's a good idea to talk over your strategy with trusted friends, family, college counselors, and others whose advice you trust.

To learn more, visit the Web site at www.Destination-U.net.

• *Toby Waldorf, a member of the National Association of College Admissions Counselors, is recognized for her successful approach to college matching. She is the founder of Destination-U, an online service that matches students to colleges where they are most likely to thrive.*