

Early Decision (ED) vs Early Action (EA)

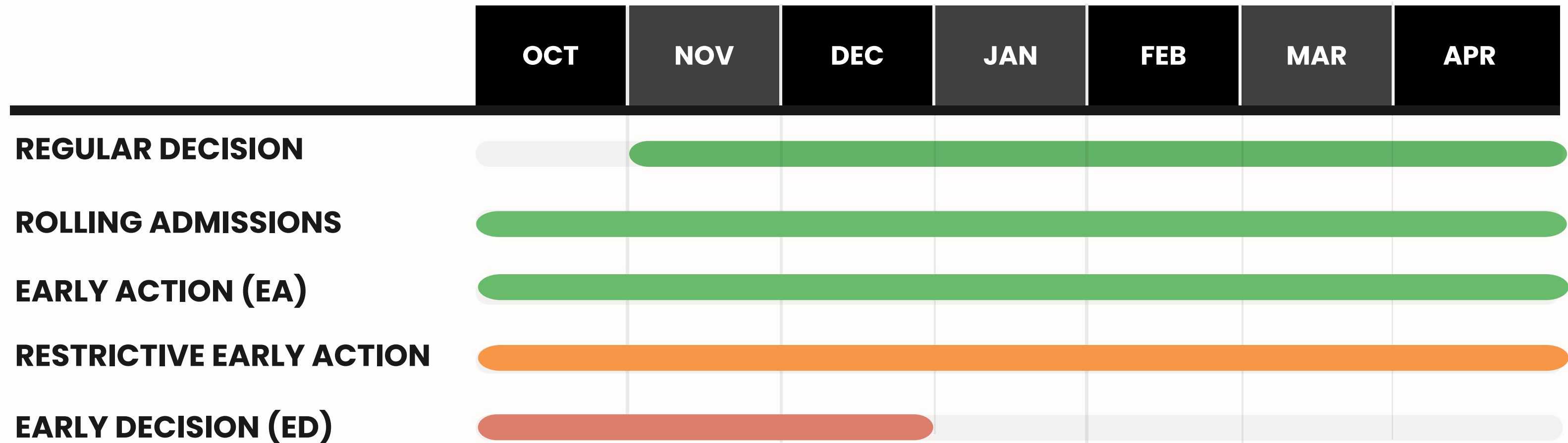
PGHS Counseling
August 2025

Senior Shorts Information Series

Objectives

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| Objective 1 | Define the different types of four-year college admissions cycles. |
| Objective 2 | Explain the how each option impacts students and their college admissions decision making. |
| Objective 3 | Explore the pros and cons of each option. |

Admissions Options



General Info about ED & EA

- Roughly 450 schools in the US offer an Early Action or Early Decision option (less than 10% of US colleges and universities).
- ED and EA have earlier application deadlines and admissions notifications.
- ED is best for students who have completed their college research and are confident in their first choice college or university.

[Facts About Applying Early Decision or Early Action – BigFuture.](#) Live Link ★

Early Decision (ED)

1. Students can only apply for ED to *one school*.
2. While students can apply via regular decision applications or early action to other schools, if admitted to their first choice school Early Decision, they must withdraw their applications to all other schools.
3. Because an ED application is binding, colleges typically require ED applicants to have a form signed by a parent and a school counselor stating the student understands the application is binding, and the student agrees to enroll if accepted.
4. ED applications are typically due in November. Students should check the deadline with their school of choice, as this might vary.
5. ED applicants typically receive admissions decisions in December.
6. There can be higher admissions rates at selective schools that offer ED admissions.

[What to Know About College Early Action and Early Decision | Applying to College | U.S. News.](#) ★

Early Decision I vs Early Decision II

- The primary difference between Early Decision I and Early Decision II are the deadlines and notification dates.
- For Early Decision I, the application deadline is typically early November, and you'll receive an admission decision in mid-December.
- In contrast, Early Decision II has a deadline in early January and notification comes in mid-February.
- Admissions rates are often more generous in the Early Decision I cycle but don't always. Yale reports on their website that submitting an early application will not increase your chances of admission.
- **Early Decision II** allows students more time to submit their applications as well as submit Semester 1 senior grades.

What does Binding mean?

- A binding agreement in college applications refers to a commitment to attend a school if accepted through an Early Decision (ED) application plan.
- Binding agreements are not legally binding.
- However, if a student chooses to break an Early Decision agreement with a school, it may impact other admissions offers as schools share their ED lists with each other.
- Carefully review the ED agreement. Financial aid offers may include more loans than gift/grant aid than your family can afford.
- In cases with legit reasons, such as family illness, extenuating circumstance, change in financial circumstances, etc. the agreements *may* be broken.

Early Decision Pros and Cons

Pros	Cons
Students receive an admissions decision earlier.	<u>Binding contract</u> ; You must attend the school if admitted ED.
There can be, depending on the school, increased admissions rates for ED applicants, especially in ED I.	You may not know the financial aid offers from other schools before you are accepted ED to your number one school.
Applications are completed and done early in the school year.	You can only apply ED to one school.

Early Action (EA)

- **Non-Binding:** Early action is non-binding, meaning that students are not required to attend the college if they are accepted. This allows them to weigh their options and compare offers from other schools.
- **No Limit to Early Action Applications:** This is true for all Early Action options except for Restrictive Early Action.
- **Shows Demonstrated Interest:** By applying early, you're demonstrating to the college that you're serious about attending and invested in their program.
- **Earlier Decisions:** Receiving a decision earlier than usual from a college can relieve stress and allow students to have more time to focus on other aspects of their senior year.
- **Financial Aid:** With early action, students may receive their financial aid and scholarship information sooner, which can help them make a more informed decision about which college to attend.

Restrictive Early Action (REA)

- Also can be referred to as “Single Choice Early Action.”
- Is a non-binding noncommittal way that students can demonstrate that a school is their number one choice.
- The caveat to REA, is that, typically, you may not apply to any other private college/university under their Early Action, Restrictive Early Action, Early Decision, or Early Notification plan.
 - **Ensure you carefully review each Restrictive Early Action agreement before you apply.**

Non-Restrictive Application Plans

Regular Decision

Students apply by a specified deadline and receive a decision by a designated date, usually in late March or early April. UC/CSU application deadlines are Dec. 1, 2025.

Non-Binding

Rolling Admission

Students submit applications once the window opens and schools review applications as they 'roll-in'. Schools make admission decisions throughout the admissions cycle.

Non-Binding

Early Action (EA)

Students apply earlier in the admissions cycle and receive a decision well in advance of the school's regular decision date. Students have until May 1 to make a decision.

Non-Binding

Restrictive Application Plans

Restrictive Early Action (REA)

Like EA, but students are likely restricted from applying ED, EA, or REA to more than one school. If offered REA, students still have until May 1 to make a decision.

Non-Binding

Early Decision (ED)

Students commit to a first-choice school. If admitted to the school, you **MUST** enroll. If the student applied to any other school's regular decision, they are required to withdraw their applications.

Binding!

You are not restricted from applying to other institutions and have until May 1 to consider your options and confirm enrollment.

You are responsible for following all restrictions for your admissions plan.

Snapshot of Dates for EA & ED

EA	ED
CalTech EA: November 1 ED: N/A Regular Decision: January 5	Dartmouth EA: N/A ED: November 1 Regular Decision: January 1
MIT EA: November 1 ED: N/A Regular Decision: January 6	Columbia EA: N/A ED: November 1 Regular Decision: January 1
Stanford REA: November 1 ED: N/A Regular Decision: January 5	University of Chicago EA: November 3 ED I: November 3 ED II: January 5 Regular Decision: January 5

***Always check deadlines on each school's portal or the Common App.**

UC/CSU Dates & Deadlines

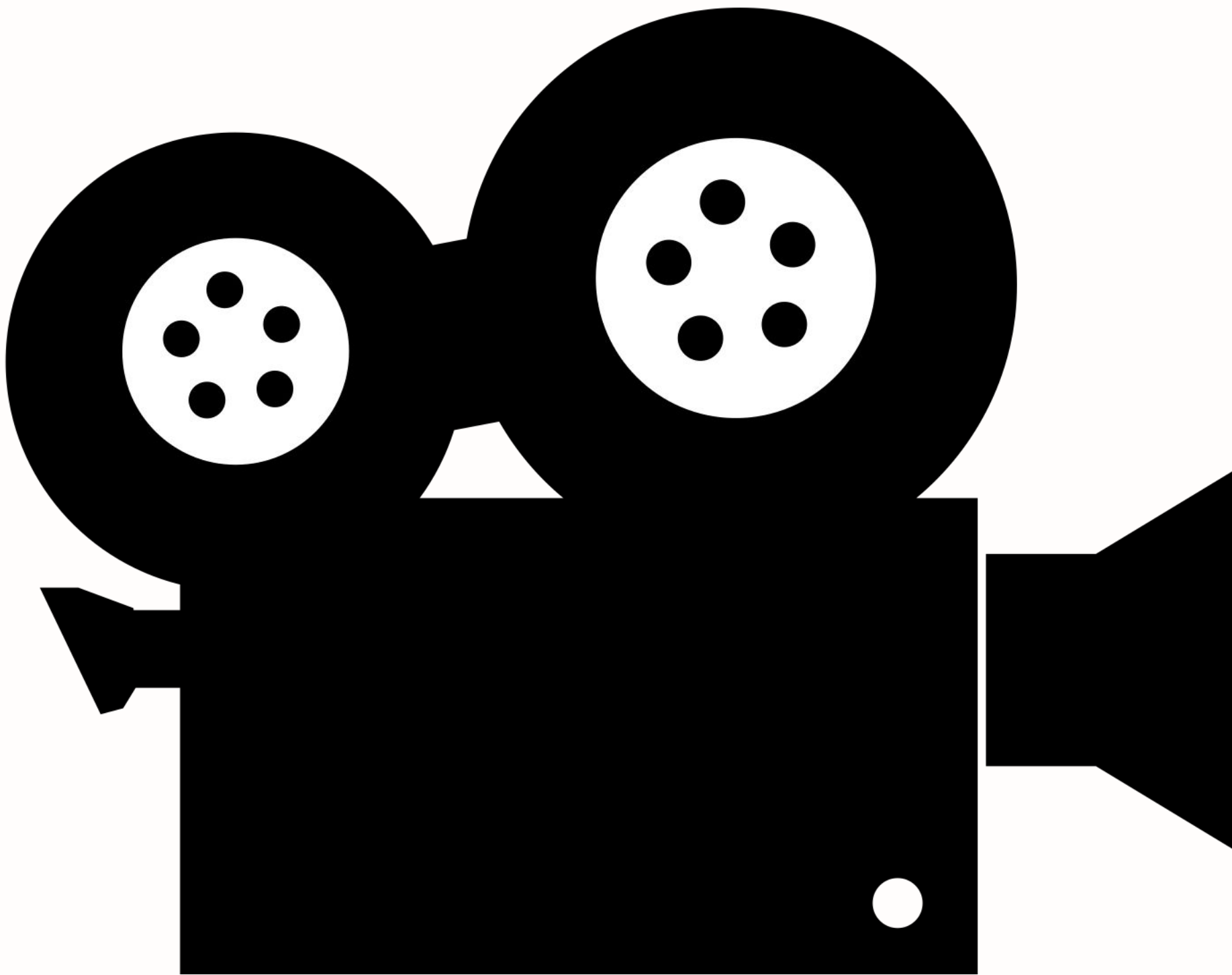
UC	CSU
<p>August 1: Application <u>opens</u> for applicants for fall 2026.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Students are strongly advised to populate their applications through their californiacolleges.edu accounts.	<p>August 1: Application <u>opens</u> for applicants for fall 2026.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Students are strongly advised to populate their applications through their californiacolleges.edu accounts.
<p>October 1 - December 1: Fall 2026 general admission application filing period.</p>	<p>October 1 - December 1: Fall 2026 general admission application filing period.</p>
<p>December 1: Final submission deadline for Fall 2026</p>	<p>December 1: Final submission deadline for Fall 2026</p>
<p>March 1 - May 1: Notification of Fall 2026 decisions</p>	<p>March 1 - May 1: Notification of Fall 2026 decisions</p>

***Always check deadlines on each school's portal or the Common App.**

Interesting Articles about ED & EA

- [What to Know About College Early Action and Early Decision | Applying to College | U.S. News](#) ★
- [15 Colleges Where Early Applicants Have an Edge](#) ★
- [3 Reasons to Skip Applying to College Early \(US News & World Report\)](#) ★
- [Early Decision and Early Action – Counselors | College Board](#) ★

Upcoming Events



25 August 2025: Early Action/Early Decision
1st period, Lunch, 7th and 8th period

15 September 2025: PIQs vs Application Essay
1st period, Lunch, 7th and 8th period

22 September 2025: Make the Most of the
Extracurriculars Section
1st, Lunch, 7th and 8th period

29 September 2025: Adding DE to the
Application
1st period PGHS Library, all ENGL1A/1B

1 October 2024: Applying to College
PGHS Library: 6:30-7:30 PM

Cash for College FAFSA Workshops
PGHS Library: 6:30-7:30 PM



Questions & Answers