

College Admissions Alert!

Know and Understand the Early Bird Menu

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Most families confuse the options on the Early Bird Admissions Menu: *Early Admission*, *Early Read*, *Early Decision*, *Early Action* and *Early Notification*. Learning these and other admissions strategies will determine where your student will spend their college years, and how much it will cost.

Early Admission: Typically, the student applies at the beginning of the junior year and goes through the entire process earlier. However, Early Admission is only recommended for the most exceptional students who complete all high school requirements prior to the 12th grade. The student must demonstrate a college level of social and emotional maturity before implementing this strategy. Schools often get into a bidding contest for the truly exceptional student. Some even offer full scholarships for the privilege of having such an accomplished young man or woman. **Use with caution!**

Early Read: Many colleges offer to calculate your EFC, (Expected Family Contribution; the minimum the federal government determines your family will pay at any college). Without obligating the student to apply, you simply send them *all* your financial information at the beginning of the 12th grade. If the student eventually applies, the aid offer has already been predetermined. Surely, you wouldn't want the IRS to calculate your taxes, so why let a college determine your EFC? **Avoid this at all costs!**

Early Decision: A program with earlier deadlines and notification dates than regular decision. Students sign a binding contract and commit to attending that school. If accepted, they must immediately notify all other schools to withdraw their applications. If money is not an issue, Early Decision is highly recommended because it will give the student a decided advantage in the admissions process. However, if financial aid is an issue, be aware that the student must attend that college regardless of the aid offered! ED is always recommended at Princeton, as they meet financial need 100% and no longer offer loans. **Use with extreme caution!**

Early Decision II: Virtually identical to Early Decision but with later deadlines, usually January 1st. As with Early Decision, only one school can be applied to. **Use with extreme caution!**

Early Action: All students are encouraged to apply for Early Action, usually November 1st to January 1st. Due to the increasingly fierce competition, the sooner a student applies the better. For the *barely* qualified student, this is the only way to go. Such a student would not fare well in the general applicant pool as they would be competing against far too many honor students and would pale by comparison. Also, any grades beyond mid-term may not count. **Always implement this strategy.**

Early Notification: Similar to Early Action except some schools ask for a financial aid commitment well in advance of the traditional May 1st deadline. Unless they make an offer you can't refuse, ask them to extend their deadline so your family can consider all offers. Families are advised against negotiating for more aid, because of the serious disadvantage of having no other offers to compare. **Avoid this like the plague!**

Open Admissions: Some four-year, most two-year and virtually all community colleges offer admission on a come-as-you-are basis. If they have room you're admitted. **Always Implement.**

Rolling Admissions: A most advantageous policy, as colleges notify students within a few weeks of receiving all necessary application documents. They usually accept until their quotas have been satisfied. **Always Implement.**

Knowing the items on the Early Bird Menu isn't enough. You must understand how to use them to your advantage in order to give your student that all-important edge in the admissions process. These strategies should not be taken lightly as they not only affect the student's education, but his or her future as well.

For more than 25 years, noted financial advisor, Reecy Aresty, has helped thousands of high school and college families to obtain the American Dream; a superior education at a cost far less than they ever dreamed possible. He is the author of the highly acclaimed admissions and financial aid manual, "How To Pay For College Without Going Broke," also available in Spanish and updated from its previous edition, "Getting Into College and Paying For It." For further information on admissions and financial aid, please visit: [**www.paylessforcollege.com**](http://www.paylessforcollege.com)