



# EARLY DECISION AND EARLY ACTION STEP-BY-STEP CHECKLIST



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You've had a dream school in mind for years. Or, you want to get the stressful college application process out of the way as soon as possible. Regardless of your reasoning, applying early action or early decision provides great options for students who feel confident with their application components and are willing to commit to a school.

As you weigh the [pros and cons of applying early](#), remember that you need to prepare your application about 2 months earlier than usual if you're going after an October or November deadline. To make sure you have all your bases covered, we've provided a checklist to guide you through every step.

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Thoroughly research your options as you [pick your early decision school](#). Make sure that you are ready to make this commitment before applying.

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Take the SAT if you already haven't. Most schools accept scores up to the October SAT session for ED/EA.

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Understand the [difference between early action and early decision](#) before deciding whether EA or ED is right for you.

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If you're applying to a school with a restrictive early action or single-choice early action policy, understand what you can and cannot do.

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Make a Common App account and answer all of the general questions. Don't save this part until the end.

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Ask your teachers for letters of recommendation, make sure they know you are applying early, and ensure they get the letters in on time.

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Start drafting your personal statement.

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Talk through your options with your guidance counselor.

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Carefully look at the data for admitted students when picking your options.

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Consider factors such as class size, course offerings, facilities available, etc., to weigh whether or not you'd be happy at a campus.

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[Tour campus](#) in person if possible, but if not, [virtually](#). These sites can especially come in handy during a pandemic.

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Plan ahead and make sure your grades, scores, and [early decision agreement](#) are all ready to be sent on time.

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Complete your activities list and add them to the Common App.

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You should have gone through multiple drafts of your first personal by the end of September.

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Once you've chosen your school, show your commitment. Demonstrate enthusiasm throughout your application so that admissions officers have no doubt about your dedication to the college.

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Convey your interest in the school through supplemental essays. Start these by mid-September. Use your school-specific questions to show why you believe this college is your number one.

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Show your knowledge. Especially if you've chosen early action, you need to emphasize that you're highly committed to the college.

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Proofread multiple times. Revise your application as many times as you can.

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Sign up for interviews if applicable.

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Reflect on any last-minute nerves that might overcome you. If you're having doubts about an ED choice, ask yourself if you're really ready to commit.

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Don't wait until the last-minute. You never know what technical difficulties you might encounter. Don't save your submission for a minute before the deadline.

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Keep working on your regular decision applications as well. Remember that you haven't been accepted yet! It might be tempting to take a break, but you've got other essays to write and applications to complete.

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Keep focusing on academics; colleges will want to see your senior year grades.

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Note that if you aren't admitted to your ED1 school you can apply [ED2 to a different school](#).

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If you've got more than one college that you're excited about committing to, make sure you dive into research to figure out which one is really the one for you. Time flies when applying to college so you have to work hard and fast! Weigh the various options and see which school can help you reach your aspirations. Take advantage of each component to demonstrate why you're a perfect fit for your dream school. Good luck!