

College Beat

Is ED for Me?

By
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In the last article I talked about the different types of early applications that exist in the world of college admissions. It seems fitting that a discussion about who is best suited to the Early Decision option should follow. As a refresher; Early Decision is a binding agreement - you may only apply to one school under the Early Decision plan and if you are accepted you must enroll at that institution. Since this agreement is binding it is often the hardest decision for students and their parents to make during the application process. I am often asked, "Will applying ED increase my chances of being accepted?" or simply, "Do you think I should apply ED *somewhere*?"

In order for me to encourage a student to apply ED certain conditions must exist. First and foremost, the student must have a school in mind that is clearly her first choice. She must have visited the college and have absolutely no doubt that if she could get into this school she would rather go there than any other college. This, as you may guess, is a tough hurdle to cross. Many seventeen year-olds do not have such convictions about what they want and let's face it there are so many good options out there that it is not an easy decision. Secondly, the school must be a good match in terms of selectivity. If a student wants to apply ED to a school that is essentially a "likely admittance" for that student then they will never know what may have happened if they had applied to a "reach school". If the school is truly the student's first choice this shouldn't be an issue but in reality there are often lingering questions over the missed opportunities – the "I wonder if I would have gotten into ____?" Third, the student must be far enough along in the process to have all of the required materials submitted by the usual November deadlines for early decision plans. Sometimes a student may need the first-semester grades which come out after the ED deadline to help build their case for an increasing trend in GPA or a set of SATII scores that will not be available in time.

It can also help to approach the question from the other angle – are there reasons why I should not consider applying ED? Absolutely. If a student is going to need to rely on financial aid to help finance his education then he should not apply ED. Students will be considered for aid if they apply ED but they will not have the benefit of being able to weigh one school's offer versus another school's offer. He will instead be committed to his ED school which may not be the best financial deal.

But what about that initial question? "Will ED increase my chances of getting in?" There is no easy answer here. It truly depends on the school. If it is an extremely selective

school then applying ED probably won't make admittance any easier because they are going to have plenty of qualified candidates that they will not be able to accept as it is. They are not going to lower their standards for admittance simply because you promised to attend if you are accepted. There are, on the other hand, some less competitive schools that may be enticed by your level of commitment to them – after all they are trying to increase their yield. My advice here is that you stick to the basic conditions I mentioned earlier to decide if you are a good candidate for ED and don't use it as means to try to beat the system – it may not work.

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