



FAQ on College Admissions

1) What are the different admission procedures?

- **Regular** - Send in all the materials before the due date, usually in December or January. All applications are evaluated then and students receive a response sometime in early April.
- **Rolling** - Students apply and usually receive a decision within two to six weeks from the time they submit the apps. Popular option since there's no commitment necessary and it reduces the period of uncertainty. Obviously, the earlier the student gets his application in, the better.
- **Early Action** - Students receive an early response but do not have to commit until the normal reply date, usually May 1.
- **Restrictive Early Action** – same as Early Action except student is restricted from applying to other EA/REA/ED schools.
- **Early Decision** - BINDING. Student applies early and is notified of the school's decision usually by mid-December. If a student is accepted, he must withdraw all other applications and commit to the school. Students must be absolutely sure the school is their first choice and that they can pay for it.

**** Check specific schools for additional details and restrictions.**

2) So which procedure should I use?

Depends.

If you're absolutely certain that you want to attend a certain college because you've done all your research, and you have strong credentials (and you're not too keen on the idea of filling out other applications), then Early Decision/Action is a good option. While the pool of applicants you're being compared to is much smaller than regular admissions, they're also pretty strong, so this process is extremely competitive. However, many top colleges admit a large chunk of their freshman class through ED/EA. If you are rejected ED/EA, then your application could get flagged with a "Rejected ED/EA" post-it and tossed into the Regular Admissions pile for round two (or maybe it's really rejected). Needless to say, it's hard to then be accepted. If your credentials are good but not strong, it's probably a better idea just to go the Regular/Rolling route instead of Early.

Here's a good tip from Robert Massa, vice president for enrollment and student life at Dickinson College (PA):

"To find out if early options would benefit you, ask the admission staff two important questions: first, what proportion of the class is admitted early; second, what percentage of the early applicants are admitted versus [the percentage of] regular applicants. The higher the first numbers are versus the second, the better your chances are of being admitted if you apply early."

3) Is a B in a hard course better than an A in an easy course?

An A in a hard course trumps both of them.

The real question should be can you handle the course load in a hard course? If it's yes, then challenge yourself. Students should be enrolling in core academic classes (math, science, English, social studies, and a foreign language) and staying away from easy A's. This rule goes for all your high school days (yes, even spring semester of your senior year). Schools can and do rescind acceptances if the candidate has suffered a major case of senioritis.

4) Is it bad to use the Common Application?

Not at all. Currently, over 300 schools accept the common application and those that do make no distinction between its use and the use of the college's own form when making decisions. Many schools also require students to submit supplemental essays and materials so make sure the students have completed all the required forms. The common application can be submitted online or by mail.

5) Should I apply online or by mail?

While we recommend the online method, there are pros and cons.

Pros

- some colleges waive the application fee
- online applications are usually processed faster
- many online applications have checks to ensure students have filled out everything

Cons

- students sometimes apply online without having someone review their work
- students need to notify their high schools in order for the school to send out transcripts and recommendations

Whichever method you choose, don't do both.

6) Should I take the Chinese SAT Subject test?

While it is tempting, keep in mind the average Chinese SAT Subject test score is an 800. In other words, anything less than perfect is below average. Additionally, how impressive is it really to get an 800 on the Chinese test if your last name is Chang and you live in Taiwan? On the other hand, if you don't have a Chinese sounding last name, go for it.

But, you're an ABC and English is truly your first language and you've been attending American school all your life and you had to work just as hard as the other guy to memorize all the characters and get the tones right. I know (trust me, I really do know)...life's not fair. Pick another subject test if you're trying to impress the admissions officers.

7) Intended Major? Intended Career?

It's completely fine to check "undecided" (assuming you are). Over 50% of all university students end up changing majors so it's near impossible to ask a high schooler to commit to a major without even taking a formal course on the subject. Don't lie about your intended major just because you think it's going to boost your chances of getting in to the school. Transferring from one department to another isn't easier and your credentials from high school are usually more stellar than your record from your freshman year in college.

8) I heard that there was this girl last year who had really low grades and scores, but she still got into ____ because her parents gave the school a lot of money. Is that true?

It could be. An applicant whose family has built something or donated something is considered a development case. Even with mediocre credentials, this kid might get into a school just because the new library's named after him. It just makes good business sense for the institution not to bite the hand that feeds it. Another special case is legacies. If the family member of an applicant is an alumni, then the applicant has a one-up on a similarly competitive non-legacy applicant. Legacy acceptance rates are usually double normal acceptance rates. For the record though, none of these factors are guarantees of admissions.